

Immanentize the Eschaton

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Characters:

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Additional Tags:

[Anbu](#) [Hatake Kakashi](#), [Missing-nin](#) [Hatake Kakashi](#), [Top Uchiha Obito](#), [Bottom Hatake Kakashi](#), [Alternate Universe](#) - Canon Divergence, Unreliable Narrator, Identity Porn, Explicit Sexual Content, Canon-Typical Violence, Established Relationship, Mostly follow canon timeline, Not A Fix-It, Psychosis, Childhood Friends to Enemies to Partners, Rationalizing Infinite Tsukuyomi, [Akatsuki Hatake Kakashi](#), more like Akatsuki Hound, Action/Adventure, Jinchuuriki Hunting, Information is Power, Mundane Made Awesome, [Tobi](#) & Hound pissed off the entire shinobi world, Moral Pragmatism, Power Dynamics, Sexual tension my favorite porn tag, BAMF [Hatake Kakashi](#)

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Immanentize the Eschaton

by [huei](#)

Summary

The story of Akatsuki Tobi and ANBU Hound on their way to bring paradise to the chaotic shinobi world.

(tl;dr : What if canon, but with Akatsuki Hound)

Chapter with art:

Ch9

Notes

The Kakashi in this will be ANBU Kakashi who never become a teacher.

The Obito in this will be Obito who has the misfortune to get distracted by Kakashi in the process of his Plan. This...changes him a bit.

The only slash relationship is Obito/Kakashi

(Dissolution of the Self) ANBU Hound

Chapter Summary

Everything is within the mission's parameters.

Except for the clown.

Chapter Notes

Timeline:

Some years after Uchiha Massacre. Naruto already academy student.

Kakashi still in ANBU

Tobi is already functioning member of Akatsuki, joining after Orochimaru's betrayal.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

If someone had asked him whether his mission is going fine or not, ANBU Hound would tell you curtly that, yes.

Nevermind he's alone and outnumbered by Kiri Hunters, or how his chakra is rapidly dwindling with every split-second substitution he had to do to avoid being gutted or surrounded.

With extremely close-range combat like this, ninjutsu doesn't always decide the outcome unless it's unique abilities like a kekkei genkai or clan-specific hidden techniques. Jutsu requires time with hand signs after all, and the more advanced it is the longer one need to go through the motions to mold chakra. It's in those precious seconds the enemy can simply move in for the kill. That's why most black-ops conflicts are decided by boring physical abilities with small additions of simple ninjutsus. Taijutsu and bukijutsu are crucial skills, hence why ANBUs spend most time training their bodies and Hound is one of the best ANBU has produced in his generation.

So yes, he will tell anyone who has the security clearance to hear it, this mission is going just fine. *Peachy.*

The vital information he retrieved had been safely sealed in a scroll carried by his ninen to Konoha and all he needs to do now is either to dispatch his pursuers or evade them.

Everything is within the mission's parameters.

Except for the clown.

Oh, did he not say?

There's a clown -currently lounging on the nearby tree- who has been the lone spectator to this impromptu gladiator show and no, unfortunately this time it wasn't his hallucination.

And this clown also has been running unsolicited commentaries for both the Kiri Hunters and Hound, shouting encouragements to the Hunters when Hound got one of them with a sword to the kidney,

"Now Hunters-san, while Doggy-Mask san is focusing on stabbing your friend!"

Or for Hound, *"Incoming nasty wind jutsu , Doggy-Mask san!"*

Or personal opinions like when a Hunter uses water jutsu while Hound brought out his lighting one.

"Ah i wouldn't do that if i were y-" a second later as the Hunter is jolting in agony, fried with a lethal dose of electrocution *"-yep."*

Hound and the Hunters were wary about this uninvited spectator when both parties noticed an unidentified chakra signature was following their pursuit. The shinobi then nonchalantly perched on one of the taller branches once they got into this semi-clearing, orange mask painfully bright even with the fog surrounding Kiri's forest. But beyond the presence, the clown didn't make any move to be involved so they return to their respective missions with the intruder relegated to the back of mind.

Soon though, as if bored, he (a shrill annoying voice, but definitely that of a man's. A very annoying man) started running his own commentaries, revealing tactics to both the Kiri hunters and Hound as if it doesn't matter which side kills which so long the entertainment lasts.

When Hound finally stabs the last Hunter, the clown on the tree jolted - *did the bastard fell asleep while he was fighting for his life. Was that why it's been quiet for the last 2 Hunters* - and leapt down dangerously close to Hound as a potential enemy and claps cheerfully.

Hound jumps back, making sure there are proper fighting distance between them.

The instantaneous rejection doesn't seem to phase the man.

Clapclap! Clapclapclapclap!

"Wah that was a fun fight! Congratulations to the winner, Doggy-Mask san!" the clown's exaggerated clapping echoes in the silent forest.

Hound glowers. He doesn't feel safe with this clown. The situation is still the same as before even if the Hunters are all dead.

Because even though this clown did nothing and has shown impartiality to both the Kiri Hunters and him, Hound recognizes the getup.

The swirling orange mask and shrill voice, he doesn't.

But the black robe patterned with red clouds? He does.

Despite the idiot act he may be playing right now (and Hound does know it's an act. Fellow actors would recognize each other, after all) the clown in front of him is a member of Akatsuki.

Hound flicks blood off his blade and readied his stance. It's possible Akatsuki had been requested by Kiri to kill him in case their Hunters failed. Though this clown certainly has a peculiar way of finishing his mission if that was the case. Then again, mercenary organization like Akatsuki doesn't have allegiance to villages. It would only help him to have Hound exhausted first by the Hunters team.

Depleted of chakra as he is, ANBU Hound isn't in the bingo book for being easy.

A cold-blooded operative, possess one-hit kill jutsu, do not engage unless necessary.

The clown shifts his weight from one leg to the other, tapping his feet almost playfully at the ground soaked in blood.

"Eh ehh what? Doggy-Mask san still wants to fight? Even though he barely has chakra left? Tobi isn't a threat, Tobi is a good boy!" He brings both arms up in a placating gesture, body language perfectly at ease despite facing the brunt of killing intent absolutely seeping from

Hound.

How did this clown gauge his chakra- Never mind that. Step back, stay alert, and assess the enemy.

The clown- 'Tobi' clearly has some sensory capability to pinpoint chakra level, and that he seemed to come out of nowhere also niggles in Hound's mind. Even if he's not a sensor, Hound can at least scent his surroundings and he had been especially vigilant tonight.

He remember there was nothing else beside him and the Hunters, and suddenly there Tobi was, as if he just steps into existence.

It was an unmistakable memory, because the man absolutely reeks of dango sauce.

But beneath that sickening sweetness, Hound noted a smell of incense or some kind of burnt wood, and musty earth. The kind that damp soil has. Did Tobi teleported from somewhere underground?

As the clown has been *kind* enough to show Hound, there're no weapons in his hands but there is a ring on his left thumb. Its metal glints under the moonlight, shining on the carving.

It's a single character, 空

Sky. Void.

"Leave, or," Hound uses his voice for the first time that night.

Missions don't usually require speaking. Between ANBU, they use gestures or are familiar enough with team member's body language. During solo missions, usually you require neither.

Tobi, though, seems to be the type that talks a lot regardless of the situation he's in.

He cocks his hip with one hand, as if shocked to be told off, "How rude! Tobi helped Doggy-Mask san, and there's not even a thank you!?"

Twitching to just stab the clown where it hurts and end this very long night, Hound gathers the last of his patience. He hope Tobi just leave

so he won't need to write additional report. Technically there's no law against killing missing-nins or mercenaries, but he knows he shouldn't solve his problems by just killing it and give the ANBU medic office more reasons to badger him with therapy sessions.

"And you also helped my pursuer. Leave," he flit the bladed side of his sword toward Tobi, as clear threat as any, "before I turn you into collateral damage."

It's Chapter 3 of ANBU code, Article 112 subsection C, which Tobi is about to be an example case of should the clown doesn't get out of his way soon.

Tobi lowers his hands and chuckles deep. Like a switch flicked, the amiable persona vanishes in an instant.

"Ever so uptight, Hound. Calm down. Besides, the moon is beautiful tonight. Doesn't this scenery just make you *nostalgic*?"

If Tobi wanted Kakashi to calm down, he's really using the wrong words for that.

Hound pounces, blade first.

His opponent parries with a kunai suddenly appearing out of nowhere, the ear-piercing noise of metal scraping against each other rings once more throughout the silenced clearing.

Tobi dances around the bodies littering the ground with practiced ease while Hound has to consciously keep track of where to step so he doesn't stumble. The gifted-sharingan does wonders in helping his visual acumen.

When it becomes clear that Tobi is staying on the defensive and not even using any jutsu, Hound gritted his teeth in frustration. This fight could drag on, and once the Akatsuki member decides playtime is over Hound will be at a disadvantage. He just fought an entire squad of Kiri Hunters while Tobi did nothing but watch. Making a decision, Hound planned his movement to slowly herds Tobi in front of a tree,

and struck.

The shierking of a thousand birds flares to life in the empty forest.

Kiri Hunters. Forest. Chidori.

Tobi is right. This is an intimately nostalgic scenery for Hound.

And when he finally gets back to Konoha, submits his report, takes off the ANBU uniform, and goes back to being jonin Hatake Kakashi, he's going to finish an entire bottle of sake he kept in the empty apartment he called home, curse this soon-to-be-masked-corpse, and go to sleep. And then he's going to be awakened by yet another nostalgic scenery, and curse this soon-to-be-masked-corpse again, on top of his own self, while he washes **her** blood from his hands.

Those are Hound's to-do list for the night which he can get to doing after he extracts his hand from Tobi's body. However, as life after Team Minato is a punishment from the gods, Hound will have to scratch some of his To-Dos.

Starting with 'gets back home'.

Because while his hand *did* go through Tobi's body, it was not in the way Hound intended.

Hound stares wide-eyed at the point of supposed-contact. Rather than the feeling of bones crunching as they give ways, the sinewy muscles of the heart ripping open through the force of the lighting, he felt... nothing. Except for the rough tree bark behind when his hand finally hits something.

Am I fighting...a ghost? he wonders wildly for one irrational second.

Yet he remembers the feel of his blade hitting against something physical. Hallucination then? Did his brain finally snap, during a solo-mission of all time?

...No. This had to be genjutsu or Tobi's technique.

This place, the pooling blood, the bodies of Kiri nins. Everything it reminds him of is messing with his mind.

As if privy to his thoughts, the pinned man in front of him laughs in that menacing deep voice again.

“What’s the matter, *Kakashi*?” the man rolls the ending of Kakashi’s name on his tongue easily, like he’s familiar with how much is the right amount of mock-affection to the name, “is this the first time that famous jutsu of yours failed to kill someone?”

Hound's gaze snap back to the enemy's face. This close, he could see through the single hole on that orange mask. In its trademark eerie glow, the shape of a black pinwheel swirls languidly in a sea of red.

Sharingan.

“Don’t you wish it was also the case *that* time?”

Kakashi’s eyes widened, his own sharingan spun and the Mangekyou flares. Distantly he feel the immediate drain to his chakra pool, not life-threatening (yet) but enough to have the Konoha medics start yelling about his recklessness.

But Kakashi’s mind was somewhere else, or rather, *somewhen*.

A beloved comrade’s face superimposed over the enemy in front of him.

However this time, there’s blood around where his hand had gone through. Like it should be.

And the feeling of torn muscles and bones fracturing was also there.

Like it should be.

The memory forever preserved as hyperreal recollection thanks to the sharingan’s recording prowess. Obito’s gift, Kakashi’s curse and Rin’s projectionist, all in one powerful eye.

In an instant, Hound jerks back without thinking. Fear and horror clouds over skill, making his movement clumsy in that desperate need to move away from what-**whoever** is currently in front of him.

Tobi, no longer pinned, lashes out with deadly speed he didn’t reveal in previous fight and locks his right hand around Hound’s throat, preventing the shocked ANBU from retreating further.

His jump unceremoniously aborted, Hound dropped onto one knee, struggling to stay upright from the strength forcing him onto the ground.

Tobi rose to full height and bends to look down on the ANBU, the

moonlight a halo around his head.

“Ah none of that, we’re not done yet.”

Tobi has the skill of making his voice more threatening than the hand coiling around Hound’s windpipe.

“You..you’re..that eye,” Kakashi barely chokes out.

After the Uchiha massacre, the only known Uchihas alive are Itachi and Sasuke, and only Itachi should possess the evolved form of Mangekyou sharingan since Sasuke didn’t awaken his that night. While it’s not far-fetched to think someone else could have an implanted sharingan like Kakashi’s, each Mangekyou has a unique shape. Kakashi knows at least that much, having heard of the clan’s legends & stories from Ob-

Obito’s sharingan....his gift. Kakashi *knows* the shape of its Mangekyou form.

He didn’t know how the one in his head awakened, but he suspected that only the true owner’s feeling can cause it and Rin was Obito’s most cherished person. In a way, to have Obito’s eye witnessed her death was the only reason Kakashi could think of why he suddenly possessed the Mangekyou.

But when Obito died buried in that cave, he had a normal tomoe-sharingan. It shouldn’t be possible to unlock it even if a thief had somehow known there’s an Uchiha buried there, and pilfer the remaining eye. To awaken its Mangekyou, the thief would have to witness someone Uchiha Obito cherishes die, but that person had already died by Kakashi’s own hand that night.

Which means, an impossibility as it was yet there’s only one conclusion Kakashi could arrive at.

“Obito...?” Kakashi’s voice is small even to his own ear, and almost disappears once filtered through his masks. He wasn’t even sure if he had spoken.

A name for the past years he only ever utters in front of a cold, unanswering stone.

To say it before another living person feels very wrong.

To be answered is beyond terrifying.

Chapter End Notes

Tobi wears Orochimaru's ring, by the way.

Hi! If this chapter interest you, you might want to read this admittedly long note because this story will be a journey.

--- Regarding author:

I'm an artist, not a writer.

I love obkk and i've always wanted to see Tobi swaying ANBU kks to his side. That's all. My brain had been torturing me with this hc and it's truly a pity i can't draw a ~40k story in a single comic panel.

So in desperation (and utterly enabled by an encouraging author-friend) i turn to writing, even though it's not my usual medium.

I am doing my best with what verbal skill i have & free time i can set aside for this story.

--- Regarding title:

"Immanentize the Eschaton"

tl;dr To bring paradise (heaven, utopia, etc. which you supposedly achieve in afterlife at end of the world) to reality (immaterial world)

Like what Obito was trying to do with his Infinite Tsukuyomi.

--- Regarding fic & schedule:

~40k total divided into 6 main multichaptered-arcs weekly updated

Ignore that wordcount. Clearly i know nothing about writing. I'll be damned this might actually reach 100k eh.

i have actually finished structuring until the ending mostly because my own brain will kill me if i end this on cliffhanger.

--- Regarding plot & characterization:

This fic focuses on the progression of obkk interaction & dialogue. not fight scenes/dramas. Other characters exist but happen in background.

In Naruto, there's actual shinobis, and there're the powerhouse flashy character.

Obito is the flashy shinobi. Kakashi is the actual slit-your-throat-from-the-shadow shinobi.

So that's who Kakashi is in this fic. He's black-ops. His role is a

different type than Obito. His attention to details mindset as an actual grunt shinobi (the one who infiltrates, etc) and (canon) side-hobby of fuuinjutsu (sealing) is an importaint point for this fic.

In my house also, the dead stays dead.

As said before this fic isn't about jutsu-porn, power scaling is toned down.

Nobody is spamming jutsu except Obito spamming Kamui because that's kinda his schtick.

The most outrageous jutsu is, Kamui, Izanagi, and Rinnegan that's all.

I refuse Edo-Tensei army on principle.

My favorite Naruto ost is Tomoyo.

If you notice, It's a more battle-variation of Obito's Theme and Kakashi & Obito osts both of which were more melancholic.

That's the vibe i'm aiming for in this fic.

There's an energetic melancholy, there'a hint of action, but not rock n roll.

--Regarding themes & warnings:

Amorality and violence tag should clues everyone in.

I don't really care about those ridiculous "fiction purity" trend.

What obkk has between each other is what just is. Everyone reading has a perfectly functional brain that can decide for themselves if they're comfortable to keep reading or not.

I do agree with major trigger warning, which is why i tag Violence.

Anyway i'm not gonna do any babying,

So this fic is for mature, sensible member of society with limited free time who can tolerate blurry lines in fiction and who just want a break from tiring irl with a bit obkk plot and porn.

Here we go obkk fans.

(Dissolution of the Self) Akatsuki Tobi

Chapter Summary

Speaking of dangerous,
There's an incapacitated ANBU whose throat he's still strangling.

Chapter Notes

(Please see Chapter 1 end notes if you haven't. It explains this story)

Thank you for your encouraging comments and i'm very happy to see my verbal skill didn't make anyone suffer!

Based on the first chapter, if anyone thinks i have a metaphorical hard-on for the concept of black-ops/ANBUs in general, you would be right. That's something that'd be uh, metaphorically erect, until the end of this story.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

...Well.

Obito hadn't exactly been subtle, lost in his own reminiscence as he was.

The sight of Kakashi being pursued by Kiri nin had stirred many locked away memories, mostly unpleasant ones. But even a half-delirious genius is still one, Obito saw the moment Kakashi connected the dots and recognition sparked in those mismatched eyes and the subsequent horror.

Strangely Obito doesn't feel too irked at this loss of his anonymity, something that is very integral to his long-standing plan. Once they knew about this Zetsu would've eaten him alive if he didn't have Kamui.

Or if he wasn't the only one capable of realizing Infinite Tsukuyomi.

Perhaps Obito can't claim to be unaffected by this familiar scenery either, despite his taunting. Kakashi looks to be teetering on either a mental breakdown or chakra exhaustion, whichever comes first. Konoha Medics would bet the latter, Obito the former. And seeing Kakashi's mental state crumbles faster than a doton wall under fire

jutsu has done wonder to his own sanity.

Konoha's genius who made Jonin at 12; cold-blooded ANBU Captain Hound; Friend-Killer -no that's not right. It was a suicide- Hatake, on one knee before a deadlast like Uchiha Obito.

He revels and despises it at the same time.

His mind drinks in the sight, knowing the psychological power he has over his formerly haughty teammate is always a heady drug even when all Obito did before was watch from far. (And Obito know Kakashi went to the Memorial Stone for *his* name, because he'd been doing that even before Minato and Kushina's was added to it.)

But his heart also twist at this maddeningly unpleasant sight because only in a trash world like this would Hatake Kakashi be brought down so low.

For someone who claims to have renounced his attachment to this hell, when it comes to Kakashi it's infuriating that Obito seems only be able to feel either extreme ends of hatred or love.

From hatred came malice. From love, sympathy. Since he knew Kakashi was also just a victim of this rotten shinobi system. He wants equally to hug his former comrade and commiserate in cursing the world together yet at the same time drive a kunai into his heart.

Both options seem dangerous, so he settled for neither.

Speaking of dangerous,

there's an incapacitated ANBU whose throat he's still strangling.

He cocked his head to the side, considering his answer. The Plan hinges on his anonymity and no matter his personal conflict toward Kakashi, he shouldn't make an emotional decision.

A little late for that, Obito noted. An old habit that resurfaced thanks to his former teammate.

The nostalgia really did get to him too.

But Obito excels -no, *thrives* in improvisation. Even if it was himself who jeopardizes his own plan. This too, he can fix.

And if not?

Well his moral code is no longer against placing a strong genjutsu on the entire world, much less a former teammate.

“At least the chakra exhaustion didn’t get to your brain yet, Kakashi.” Discarding falsehood, Obito used his true voice. It came out scratched, gravelly, his vocal chords having been slightly damaged by the boulder.

If anything, that seems to distress Kakashi more than if he had used Madara’s menacing voice. Kakashi’s pulse jumped when Obito spoke, and he could only imagine the situation inside Kakashi’s head. He releases Kakashi’s throat by the time he finished, but Kakashi either didn’t realize or didn’t care. Before he could say anything else Kakashi grabbed his cloak with surprising strength.

Surprising, because the ANBU seemed to be very close to passing out before. Obito had to consciously stop activating Kamui on reflex.

Kakashi no longer slouches but pushes upward, his spine rigid. He looks up at Obito. And visible through the holes of the porcelain mask, a strange glint in his mismatched eyes. A madness Obito recognized, because he had seen it on himself reflected on Madara’s sharingan after he saw the hell he’s in and when the old man finally showed him there’s a way out of it.

It’s the madness of one who finally sees an escape from hell and this time it’s Obito dangling the spider thread.

“Obito...if it’s really you, then... Take back your eye, and kill me.”

He shouldn’t be surprised, really. To be as good a manipulator as he is, he learned and had his ways with people’s emotional stability. And Kakashi is such a laughingly simple case, his guilt toward Obito also doesn’t hurt. Kakashi’s father too, killed himself for his own perceived sullied honor rather than to live with his choices, if not for his son’s sake.

If the Uchiha clan’s downfall is their uncontrollable emotion, it seems for Hatake it’s their crippling loyalty to do their duty.

And look where it got either of their clans. Hatakes are practically extinct and Uchiha is following not too close behind. The honorable ones do not thrive in a world like this.

Still both of them can’t help their lineage. Like with every decision he made this night, emotions reign and Obito feels his fury uncoiling. Not

only at Kakashi but at the world that had ground down this exemplary genius into nothing but an assassin with extreme case of trauma.

Kakashi, no longer tuning his senses to gauge his enemy (because it's now Obito, not an enemy), continues his self-flagellation, unaware of Obito's slowly-rising temper.

"I killed Rin. Minato sensei and Kushina are gone. Their son is in the custody of the village and ..even your clan...And I tried but.. I can't. I can't show you the future you wanted, Obito. No matter what I do, why couldn't I keep my promise to you?" Kakashi sound like he's talking to himself instead of speaking to Obito.

He has no intention to do what Kakashi is requesting. Maybe he'll knock this suicidal idiot unconscious and just leave him be to sort his own mind. Obito can't do anything until the new world is ready. Whatever he said or do would only gouge fresh wounds, because even if he wants to help Kakashi it's also true that Obito still wants to see him hurt as well. Only Infinite Tsukuyomi can bring true paradise and Kakashi would finally be free to live without his personal demons and Obito's contradictory feelings.

From the state of things, it seems Kakashi is still unsure whether Obito is just an illusion anyway. And he can always check back later, or put on a genjutsu if Kakashi somehow remembers this event as reality.

But that reasonable option was thrown away because Kakashi is on a roll with his self loathing tonight.

"You're the one who gave me my life. It should have been me in that cave. This life and this eye was supposed to be yours. So if it's really you, then...please kill me and take back your eye."

That made Obito's blood boils. This. **idiot. dares to-**

He may not be that child anymore, but it was *his* own choice to save and gave the eye to Kakashi. He *wanted* to and never regret the fact that he did. However, it seems Kakashi only ever saw Obito's sacrifices as yet another burden.

Obito couldn't stop the venom in his voice. He wants to throttle Kakashi as is.

"And here I thought your groveling by the Memorial Stone is pathetic enough. But here you are! Konoha's Copy-Nin, ANBU Captain, Hatake Kakashi on his knee, begging to be put out of his misery by an

enemy.”

Not a flinch or the slightest reaction. Obito supposes it won’t hurt after you’ve basically told yourself the same thing over and over again. After making his outrageous request, Kakashi had hung his head down. Taking his eyes away as if not caring anymore were Obito to immediately fulfill it.

It’s understandable that Kakashi thought about it that way, Obito knew. It wasn’t that he’s disgracing or belittling Obito’s sacrifice. It’s that he cannot live up to the magnitude of it. The life Obito “gave him” is crushing him into the ground each passing days.

Logically Obito knew this, yet he couldn’t help his anger.

Emotions. An Uchiha’s downfall, truly.

Obito was about to strike Kakashi unconscious when something he almost forgotten came to mind.

Hm. An idea, or rather, as with everything tonight, an impulse.

He might be masquerading as Madara for the foreseeable future, yet he cannot completely erase the part of him that was Uchiha Obito. And Uchiha Obito was always, *always* an impulsive character.

Scratched voice cuts through silence that follows Kakashi’s mental breakdown.

“Take off your mask, Hound.”

Habits die hard, and as if broken free from a spell, Kakashi’s muddled brain instantly snaps into attention. It was unquestionably a command.

Orders had always been Kakashi’s safety net. A crutch, the medics assigned to him, would say. *Had* said.

Wordlessly, perhaps even an automatic reaction, muscle memory bypasses his brain command center which are currently experiencing moments of clarity that *he’s in a mission, he’s ANBU Hound, and an Akatsuki mem-no it’s Obito-* just, - Kakashi’s hand reached to undo the

ties to his porcelain mask.

“Look at me”

Kakashi looks up to find Tobi- *Obito* had also taken off his own mask.

It's a face Kakashi never thought he'd be able to see again in life. A face he'd last seen, albeit a younger version of it, pinned and buried in a cave somewhere in the Land of Grass.

Uchiha Obito. Scarred and matured, with lone sharingan shining red, look down on him impassively.

Kakashi's own reaction was only the tightening grip on the white porcelain. For an awaited reunion with an old teammate that he dreams of almost as often as his dreams of killing the other old teammate, it's a rather sombre affair. The forest around them is quiet, as if everything waits with bated breath on what about to happen next.

Obito's hand shoots up. Kakashi fully expects it to pluck out his eye right then and there and he'd been fully prepared. He'd been fully prepared for it his entire life ever since he was 12 and Rin's blood flowed freely along his arms down to his elbow. Kakashi does not flinch, does not close either of his eyes. He kept one hand on his thigh, the other hangs by his side, holding his mask. He had no intention of stopping Obito.

But Obito's hand didn't plunge into his left eye-socket. Instead its thumb traces the scar that vertically marred his cheek and rests cupping his jaw.

Nevermind Obito touching him, because *that* his dreams gave him. Mostly that regrettable touch when Obito pushed him away from the boulder. But it looks and feels surreal to actually see Obito speaking to him.

Kakashi's brain, which somewhat regained its faculty for the first time this night since he saw Tobi's Mangekyou, kicked to gear to concentrate on what Obito is saying.

"Ever since Minato and Kushina, my gift is the sole reason you kept on living. I know how much you're suffering, Kakashi. At the very least, I didn't intend for *this* to happen." The fingers holding his jaws tightened. Obito is visibly trying to restrain his anger, his eyebrows furrowing. Though strangely, most of the ire doesn't seem to be directed at Kakashi because Obito's expression look conflicted when it bore into his.

"Nevertheless, it just shows what a worthless hell this world is."

The Uchiha exhales. Obito's sharingan seem to blaze crimson when he speaks again. Kakashi is tranced by how it's not only anger the Uchiha kekkei genkai can reflect, but *all* of their emotions. This time, it reflects Obito's determination.

"But I'm going to right the world.

Once my plan begins, there won't be anymore pain or death; no children in wars they had no business fighting; no more heroes making excuses before a grave. A world where we can reunite with our loved ones, and live once again with them in bliss. I will finally create true, eternal peace in this world, Kakashi."

To Kakashi, Obito's world sounds like an *afterlife* dream come true instead of any real world. If it's any other person, he'd have scoffed at it as a mere delusion. However, it is *Obito* saying these to him.

Obito, who managed to make Kakashi see the right path, albeit a little too late.

Obito, whose gift, undeserved it may be, helped Kakashi to survive each day even after he had lost everything.

Obito, his hero, who despite being crushed by a boulder and left for dead by his own team, is apparently still trying to make the world a better place. Just like back then, when that bright Uchiha boy declared his dream of becoming a Hokage.

Kakashi could only feel struck awed hearing Obito's declaration. His own jaded cynical thought bleeds away in the face of his old comrade, once again giving light to Kakashi's world.

When Obito continues, his voice softens. No longer holding a righteous anger or hateful edge. It's a familiar tone to the teammate who told Kakashi his father was in fact a hero.

“Kakashi, I’ve made you promise me a lot of things, haven’t I? Nevermind that you couldn’t fulfill a single one of them. But that’s not your fault. It’s this world that’s insane.”

Kakashi, is very confused right now.

He was the one who, despite being in a shinobi team, didn't value actual teamwork until it was too late (by sages, even ANBU requires a functional teamwork. Nevermind being a bad friend, he was the incompetent shinobi. Not his teammates.)

And *he* was the one who killed Rin.

How is Obito saying it wasn’t Kakashi’s fault?

But being an ANBU means having more restraints than the average Shinobi. An aging Hokage isn’t the fastest speaker while giving out their assignments, and often you’ll have to wait for hours while spying for the right information. An ANBU’s patience is a well trained skill.

So Kakashi stamps down his confusion and self-loathing, and *listens*.

“This time, I will give you mine. I promise to end your suffering. And when the time comes, I will let you choose which freedom you want: To join the world i created, or to die by my hands as you had requested.”

He sucks a sharp breath, but Obito isn’t done yet, “However, I’m still working to realize my plan. And until that time arrives,”

Suddenly gloved fingers clawed tight, digging into his skin and forced his head upwards. Obito leans down closer, Mangekyou spun alive. His teammate speaks the next sentences with a hard, gravelly voice that no longer reminds Kakashi of the past-Obito.

Despite that, to Kakashi it’s still Obito. Just the one who had gone through so many things.

“Your life belongs to **me**. Not to Konoha anymore. Not to your former ties. And not anyone or anything else who you might encounter in the future. Until I take back the life I gave you, as you’ve asked me to, it belongs to **me**. Do you accept my promise, Kakashi?”

It seems not only power that is transferred with an Uchiha’s

sharingan, but their madness too.

Mask in one hand, Hatake Kakashi- *Hound* stays kneeling on one knee as he slowly lowers his head in front of the Akatsuki member.

No, not toward *Akatsuki*

Uchiha Obito.

His comrade. His hero who hoped to become Hokage but had to trade his dream to save Kakashi's life, is now instead hoping to save the world from the pain they, and many shinobis have experienced.

Hound's hand formed a fist, touching the ground in a gesture not unlike one he made when he accepted this Kiri mission from the Sandaime.

The burning sincerity of his own action shocked his numbed heart to life like a lightning bolt. For the first time in a decade, Kakashi feels...*alive*. As if an all-encompassing black fog inside has been lifted, Kakashi feels for the second time the kind of clarity he experienced only once before, that time in Kannabi when Obito's words got through him to save Rin.

There is something he can look forward to, the future.

Even back when they were children, Obito has always had the power to inspire him.

"Yes."

Chapter End Notes

This is a short arc, but the scene of Hound bowing to Tobi is the one that burned my brain enough to finally write.

As you probably guess, this story is basically (Hokage) Obito x Anbu Kakashi fetish, friends. Just with Tobi.

Also as said this is ANBU Kakashi mindset.

Had Kakashi been in a better place at the moment, maybe if there's still Minato and Kushina, Kakashi would be able to see Obito's insanity for what it was.

But Kakashi had lost everyone, Konoha is barely a home anymore as much as merely a place to sleep at night for him right now.

He hadn't met Naruto, and his guilt and self-loathing is at an all time high.

This is Anbu!Kakashi's mindset at the time obkk was reunited.

And like with Madara's own manipulation of Obito. It's all about the right timing. Had Obito been too early (there's still Minato and Kushina) or too late (Naruto) then Kakashi wouldn't've been swayed.

It's all about timing, and Obito knew this.

In a doggy metaphors i suppose, Obito leashes this stray doggie before it can find new pack. Or something whoa my kink is showing.

(A few days after i outlined this chapter, i just realized the kneeling thing coupled with Obito's promise, it's like a marriage proposal!?

But no no it's ANBU thing that they do when they receive the Hokage's orders.

But still, figures that an Uchiha cannot propose like a sane human.)

As you can see i use all of Obito & Kakashi's identity interchangably. This is the trend until the end of this fic too. (also i wasn't used to AO3. I almost got a heart attack when the draft disappear but you had to use Edit Chapter, not Edit the entire thing. I see. I'll be careful)

(Idyllic Years) Observation

Chapter Summary

Obito left while Kakashi wash the dishes after the most bizarre and surreal breakfast in his entire life, barring none.

Chapter Notes

Thank you very much for your comments!!

Ahaha i wonder if the expectations after Ch.2 was was Hound immediately following Tobi to Akatsuki hideout?

But no no.

Since this longer chapter, I'll say this at beginning note so there's no mis-expectation:

This is a completely domestic arc in Konoha (where I profess love for JoninIF Obito x Kakashi dynamic of course in Tobi & Hound context).

That "Missing-nin kakashi" tag will come to play later.

This is also when Kakashi's personality starts to shine through as the troll Kakashi everyone later knows him as (the always late, lazy genius, porn-reading little shit)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

What Konoha observe

To civilians and random Konoha citizens, the elite jonin Hatake Kakashi doesn't seem any different. They know him as a polite and rather offstandish, professional shinobi. The fourth Hokage's surviving student and one of their village's best.

However, among those who works together with the Hatake, he might as well have flipped 180 degrees.

Even if Kakashi was already famously cold and aloof since everyone can remember (since Hatake Sakumo's death, to be exact), he jumped into antisocial territory after the tragedy of Team Minato and it only worsen since he entered ANBU (literally: dark side).

The point being, no one know if Hatake has facial expression beyond respectful concentration toward the Hokage and a menancing glare for

the rest of the world. Yet one day, having coming home from yet another solo S-for-practically-Suicide-rank mission in Kirigakure, Hatake staggered into the ANBU HQ sporting a pitifully low chakra reserve, mask on face and apparently he cheerfully greeted a "Yo!" at Bird and Ox, the two operative on night-shift duty that day.

Ox was so spooked they immediately pulled a kunai and a restraining earth jutsu on Team Ro's Captain, demanding he stay still as Bird performs a disguise test. Both ANBUs had wholeheartedly believed Hound was an impostor.

Hound stood patiently through it all, even politely fall half-asleep while standing. No brusque nor condescending reply for the 'unnecessary delay', which he definitely would've sneered before. After both guards deemed he's who he looked like, Hound waves away their uneasy apology with a lazy "Hai, hai" and headed straight to the locker room, leaving two mentally-sound ANBUs standing ramrod straight questioning whether they're actually in a strong genjutsu or not.

Apparently it unnerved the two enough that the Sandaime received a written report of it the next day.

Sudden change in behavior isn't extraordinary, especially with the kinds of work ANBUs do. But when it comes to Kakashi's case, apparently it was alarming enough to warrant a letter of concern to the Hokage. Such is his fellow shinobi's trust in the Hatake's spiraling mental psyche; The sky is blue, the grass is green, a suddenly happy Hatake doesn't just happen, especially after a mission in Kiri.

Hokage Sarutobi sighed at the report, *-Hound-taichou cheerfully greeted us with a "Yo!" as he entered the premise-*, looking at the bolded and underlined **cheerfully** like somehow this is the part the Hokage should be concerned with the most.

He knows Kakashi's personality wasn't a basket of sunshine even before what happened, but do his coworkers have to fuss over a simple greeting?

Perhaps Kakashi was feeling the adrenaline. After all, he had just finished an S-ranked mission and survived. Veteran shinobi or not, one tends to be in a good mood to get through that in one whole piece.

Sarutobi puffs his pipe and files the report away for later-likely-never consideration. Thinking about the recent disturbing trend of missing orphans in Konoha, the Hokage has more pressing matters to worry

about than Hound's sudden attempts at social pleasantries.

- -

Kakashi's own friends in the jonins roster also share his ANBU coworkers' trepidation at this sudden change, but not for the same reason since they actually know what Kakashi was like back in the academy.

Kid Kakashi...was a little *brat*.

To them, this "new" Kakashi is more like the one they knew before Konoha's White Fang made the decision to end his life. As such, the cause of their concern isn't so much 'what changed Hatake' but rather 'what reverted Hatake'.

Gai, being Gai, was overjoyed when he, Kurenai, Asuma, and Genma discussed the disturbing latest development of their genius teammate over daily tea breaks.

"It seems to me that my Eternal Rival has finally healed, and regained his Youth-self! I am happy for him!" Gai had tearfully yelled into his sleeve, slamming his glass down as if he just drunk a reasonably strong alcohol. The Green Beast's oolong tea splashed on the table.

From the corner of her eyes, Kurenai spotted a shock of spiky white hair making its way in front of the teashop,

"Speak of the devil."

Kakashi had been at home writing follow-up reports on the Kiri mission. On the 5th page he stretched, feeling bones cracking into place all over his body, and decide it was time for a break. Which is why he's now walking the streets of Konoha in the evening, fresh bouquet of white lilies in hand.

"KAKASHI!" Only one person would still boisterously calls out his name these days.

The usual group of his jonin peers are having their daily gossip session in the teashop.

Kurenai waved hesitantly at him, while Asuma nodded his greeting. Genma opted for a lazy smile and a tilt of head. Usually upon seeing this group of friends Kakashi would be reminded of his own that he had tossed away until it was too late and recoiled from the sight.

It still does, but meeting Obito again had pushed him to appreciate the friends he has that are still alive. And see that the world isn't as dark as it was, because there is hope even for Kakashi to recover a piece of his family back.

So Kakashi raises the hand not cradling Rin's bouquet and mentally sighed when his fellow Jonin friends blinks in surprise like Bird and Ox did. Asuma and Kurenai exchanged those telepathic glances every couple gradually develop. Encouraged, Gai stands up and excitedly makes his way to Kakashi.

“Kakashi! Congratulations on finishing yet another mission! I’m glad to see you come home, Rival.” Gai’s voice lowers into a gentle note at the end. He’s not as obtuse as one might think.

“How about a YOUTHFUL challenge, rival? Not one so strenuous of course, since you’ve just came back from a mission-”

Kakashi ducks his head, Gai’s enthusiasm always overwhelm him when faced directly in the eye.

“Ah, no sorry Gai i’m about to-” and shrugged at the bouquet in his hands.

Gai’s smile fell a little, but he’s always quick to recover his cheer. At least his rival didn’t just turn away and wordlessly leave like before, so that’s progress.

“But maybe next time”

Gai, too used to Kakashi’s rejection, was already on his autopilot in accepting excuses.

"It's alright Kakashi! I understand how busy you- EH?"

Now it’s Gai’s turn to react like the rest of Konoha population who experienced this ‘new’ Kakashi. Being Gai, he quickly responded in a typical Gai way, “Rival! Of course!” he beamed.

Kakashi, not knowing what else to say and having expended all the social energy he had (it wasn’t even a proper conversation, but it’s not

like he had much from the start), pat his beaming coworker on the shoulder as goodbye, and resume walking towards the Konoha Cemetery.

Gai stands for a full minute where Kakashi left him until that shock of white hair disappears from view, then he turn back to the teahouse and rejoin his friends.

“Wow, my Eternal Rival has changed,” was all he said, nursing his glass of Oolong as he pondered about what just happened in the last minute.

“He has indeed,” Asuma agreed easily, still ambivalent on what to feel about this entire thing with Kakashi. He's unsure if this is “Hatake being better” or “Hatake finally snapped”. Given Kakashi’s track record, one would immediately assume the worst and they have to put into consideration the mission Kakashi just came back from. The one that *allegedly* cause this shift of behavior.

With his connection to the Hokage office, Asuma is not blind about the kind of mission Kakashi undertook for ANBU despite the secrecy protocol. A solo S-ranked recon mission to Kiri is practically suicide for lesser shinobis and from what he heard Kakashi barely returned with his life after having to dispatch a squad of Hunters on the way back.

Perhaps for someone like Kakashi, the way such a person unwind is to occasionally be let out to risk their life 'for the sake of the village' as penance for the guilt they've internalized. Asuma had known many good shinobi dies a dog's death like that, some he heard from the Hokage's old stories, others he heard it for himself.

Asuma can hardly say anything on Kakashi’s coping mechanism, himself not very close with Team Minato during the war. But while he's a realist, Asuma can hope. Human mind is complex and varied. Perhaps this is a ‘good’ kind of snapping. Shinobis’ standard for a healthy mind is different from civilians’. And if an overwhelming tragedy can happen overnight, then why not a good thing too? The world may be cruel but it can also be unexpectedly kind like that. Bad and good, reality goes in both spectrums.

Kami knows if there's anyone who deserves happiness, or at least a break, it's undoubtedly the sole surviving member of Team Minato.

What Rin's Grave observe

Whenever he visits Rin's grave, the only kind of words he can utter are almost always an apology. Today is not any different, but he finally has other things to say too. He suspects Rin may be bored with his sorrys by now.

Settling down the flower, watering the stone, he held his hand together in prayer and of course, an apology. After that he just..plopped in front of the grave.

Unlike Obito, they had her body to bury. So being here is truly him being near to Rin.

Time passes by and he see some Konoha citizens, shinobis and civilians alike, at the cemetery doing visits, or like Kakashi, losing themselves in their own grief.

Sunset in Fire Country had always been beautiful. The sky took on a fiery colour like the land's namesake, even more so during autumn.

Kakashi doesn't know how to begin the news to his friend. But if it's Rin, surely she'd already know. Since if ghosts exist, then she would've always watched over Obito.

"Rin...i saw...you know," not wanting to say the name out loud in case anyone heard and suspects he went mad, or worse, the truth. He's more secretive with Obito than even with the details of his ANBU missions.

"I thought it was a ghost, but..."

No, that's not the most important part. Kakashi takes a deep breath.

"For one second, i thought..i thought i might see you by his side too, all mature and.." his voice catches, coming out strangled. Tears are also starting to form in both eyes so he takes off his hitai-ate-slash-blindfold to roughly scrub them away.

"But that's impossible because... i know I killed you that night, i *know* I killed you with my own hand and his gift, no less." He laughs in that

familiar despair, hiding behind his knees because he can't bear to look at Rin's grave while confessing the small broken hope his brain had for a split-second when Obito revealed himself.

"But even if you were a ghost I thought, if we could finally go home to Konoha together we'd -we'd be..."

Kakashi dislikes crying.

Not for being afraid of what others would call him if they see it (that's why he never had problem taunting Obito's waterworks) but for the motions it makes him go through.

Emotions welled up making his head hurt, his throat constricts, and when the tears starts flowing his nose would too. And that in turn would ruin his mask. And he *hates* taking off his mask.

Kakashi dislikes crying for many pragmatic reasons, but it's no use. He looks at his hitai-ate and two wet, mismatched eyes stares back on near the carved Konoha symbol and all Kakashi can do is watch in annoyance as one trailing drop finally spills out of the red one.

Of course it's the crybaby's eye that broke the dam first. Typical. Kakashi thinks near hysterically. But even *his* own eye couldn't hold its tears too.

So he finally sobbed and cried for the first time in front of Rin's grave.

From the guilt of killing her; from the grief of what could've been and what could never be; and from the lonely sadness that suddenly hit him at the fact that, out of their teams, only she did die all those years ago.

What the Memorial Stone observe

When Kakashi came to, it was already night time and the temperature has considerably dropped.

Rin's gravestone, predictably, offers no solace to his pleas and question, and it's just what he deserve.

The sun has long set and the cemetery is no longer bathed in that ethereal red, instead a dim silver light hung over Konoha.

Kakashi's nose is still stuffy from crying, but he's an adult shinobi and an ANBU captain, so he cleans himself, put his cloth mask back on, and says goodbye to Rin.

Before going home, he stops by the Memorial Stone and finds that he no longer has anything to say to the object that had held so many of his secrets before.

He looked for Obito's name and it was still there. *Uchiha Obito*. Still one of Konoha's hero who had died in the Third War.

But now, he sees the stone for what it was. A monument. An object.

He no longer sees the need to talk to Obito through it so he didn't. He stares at Obito's name, not quite sure what to feel about what happened that night.

If Kakashi was honest, he is still unsure if what happened was real after all. But the memory recorded in his sharingan said otherwise and sharingan never recorded his bouts of hallucinations.

That's how Kakashi could tell them apart from reality, after all.

- - -

Before going home Kakashi managed to get some late grocery shopping done, remembering he cleared out his fridge before going to his ANBU mission.

So he stops by the supermarket, and buys all the necessities for living like a normal human again until the next mission arrives. Food, expirables, what have you.

In the magazine section, he spied an innocuous-looking book with an orange cover. Orange had always reminded him of Obito. Out of curiosity, he picked it up and found that, no, it wasn't an innocent book at all. It was Jiraiya-sensei's works, Icha Icha Paradise.

Huh.

Kakashi had never been one for fiction before, much preferring to read about seals and ninjutsus whatnot. But there's a first time for everything and if he's going to start diving into the world of fiction,

surely a title penned by a legendary Sannin he respects would not be a bad start?

- -

He started reading the book out of curiosity while waiting for the miso soup to cook.

Kakashi takes back all his misgivings about reading fiction. Icha Icha Paradise is a world-shattering revelation and he'd sooner give away his apartment rather than this book.

What Obito observe

At past midnight, he wakes up to the feel of a displacement in the air, body tensing for a second before immediately relaxing once he saw the figure materializing right inside his room.

Obito, in his full Akatsuki robe and mask, stands by his bed.

Kakashi sleeps better when there's minimal light, so his habit was to switch everything off and close the curtains except for the few centimeters at the corner for either moonlight or sunrays to come through. But sharingan can see well even in the dark, and most importantly, it can detect chakra.

He watches sleepily as Obito sits down on the bed and places his mask on the nightstand.

This is the first time Obito appeared again since they met in Kiri. Obito didn't share any details on his plan or tell him what to do, instructing Hound to '*go back to Konoha for now.*'

So he went back, and now he doesn't know what his (former?)

teammate wants, or if Obito is going to slit his throat in his own apartment. Kakashi's fine with it either way. This life is no longer in his hand. He's just sorry for when they discover him, imagining this nice, strategic apartment complex is plummetting in renting price.

"I'm not going to kill you in your room, Bakashi." Obito snorted after he saw the sleepy man's eye trail his every move.

Kakashi shrugged under the blanket, "I wasn't worried about that." And he wasn't. Not about that, but about the ruined property value.

Obito turns his body slightly to face him. Kakashi can now see Obito's entire face, including the scars. The Uchiha is smirking. He never knew Obito had that kind of mocking sneer in his repertoire, it's looks strange to connect the man he is now to that loud deadlast.

"Oh? Then what are you worried about? You look at me like you're wondering where i'm going to stab you."

Having spent his emotional energy for the day, Kakashi is too tired and too sleepy to care about explaining himself. He yawns hidden under the blanket and snuggle more comfortably into his pillow, closing his eyes entirely.

"I'm a shinobi, Obito." he mumbles, as if that explains.

Obito hums noncommittally. It does, actually. Obito isn't that dumb kid anymore.

He's starting to fall asleep again despite the clear presence of someone else in his room, when Obito's voice spoke low.

"Rin will be there."

Obito's words doused him like cold water. Kakashi's eyes blink open, *both* of them. He stares at Obito who has now turned fully facing him, left-eye closed. There's knowing intent in Obito's gaze. The scarce moonlight seeping through the curtain only serve to make Obito look more like an apparition, but the clear dip on Kakashi's bed corporealizes his presence.

"Rin will be there," Obito repeats, "in the world I create. Rin will be alive. Minato, and Kushina too."

Obito's leans forward and reaches out to stroke his hair, gently parting the silver strands that concealed his puffed-up eyelids.

"So there's no need to cry, Bakashi. You were never the crybaby."

That 'world', again. It sounds too good to be true and it probably is. He knows about a thousand of practical jutsu ranking from C to S ranked, but none seem to be able to create an entire world. It seems to belong in the mythical category. A power on par with Sage of the Six Path, the god-creator of the *current* world. If Obito is going to usurp the sage's creation, does that count as heresy?

But Kakashi can't see any fault in that statement. Obito said he's going to create such a world, and even if Kakashi still thinks it's impossible to bring the dead back to life, he wonders perhaps Obito had found a compromise. There're many things in the shinobi world that defy explanations and he'll just have to be patient until his teammate can show him.

If Obito can be alive, perhaps other impossibilities were not as Kakashi initially thought. After that night when he met Obito again, the realist part of his brain had lost much respect and decision-making rights with the other part, the part that daydreams of impossibility. So he accepts what Obito says, and since apparently Obito isn't here to take Kakashi's blood out of his body, he's going to enjoy the warmth of his blanket cocoon, and the feeling of Obito's hand on his hair for a little while.

Even if it's heresy, he doesn't mind following Obito on that path. He'd seen how fragile their world is, how transient these interim peace periods between wars. If Obito has a solution for their world, Kakashi doesn't mind spilling blood for his teammate's cause.

Distantly before sleep takes him, he wonders how Obito himself got the Mangekyou. Kakashi's theory for him awakening the gifted one in his eye socket was that because he saw- killed- Rin, the person Obito cherished. Did Obito lose someone else between surviving the cave and meeting Kakashi in Kiri forest? Unlikely, Rin was Obito's light.

Perhaps...did Obito see..

his.. hand..

pier..

..cing..

- - -

Kakashi awakes well rested and light. He didn't dream of Rin's choking on her own blood, but of the time when three of them were Team Minato before the war again. He didn't remember exactly what it was about, but at least he didn't jolt awake with the need to wash his teammate's blood off his hand. How long has it been since he didn't have any nightmares?

"Had a good sleep?"

His head turned so fast he could feel the nerve at the base of his neck stings in protest. The silverhead was in such a sleepy daze that even his instinct hadn't woken up yet. He didn't realize there's another person in his room.

Obito.

On his bed.

Beside him.

Sometime in the night, Obito had discarded his Akatsuki robe and is now wearing a simple black shirt and shinobi pants. He's currently leaning against the wall reading a scroll with one hand. His other hand lays relaxedly beside Kakashi pillow, palm open.

Kakashi doesn't have the brain capacity to deal with the idea that he might've clung on to Obito's hand throughout the night. As it is, he has more important matter to focus on with the amount braincells currently operational.

"...Uh..?" was all the genius croaked out. So, none.

They met twice now, sure, but both times he had never seen Obito under anything other than moonlight. That helps Kakashi to half-convince himself that Obito is just a really, *really* real illusion and that his neurotic brain had finally managed to get one over even the sharingan.

But under the sunlight Obito looks... normal. Mundane even. The

Uchiha had covered up the empty eyesocket with some kind of black cloth tied at the side. Like this, Kakashi could see him as just another fellow Konoha jonin at rest.

Yeah, no. Even he isn't *that* delusional.

Obito doesn't deign Kakashi's morning eloquence with any kind of response, hasn't even turned his eye from the scroll he's reading. It's strange for the Uchiha to be the quiet one in conversation.

"You're..here," Kakashi tries again, his brain is still yawning in the background.

"Mm,"

Then seeming to have finished the bit he was reading, Obito rolls the scroll and in a twist of air it disappears...somewhere. Kakashi assumes it's Obito's ability because his Mangekyou flares to life for a second before receding into a black pupil.

"Would you like me to leave?" His friend finally looks at Kakashi who's still too stunned to move from under his blanket, his tone casual like this is something normal that happens.

"No i- just..didn't think you'd stay?"

Obito stretches his arms up, "I wasn't going to, but here was a quiet place to read."

"Oh...okay." His brain finally woke up and decided 'This is a thing that happens now'.

And just like that, he no longer worries about *look underneath the underneath*.

Kakashi gets out of the blanket and grabs his cloth mask from the side table. Unsure what else to say, he decides on the thing every functional adults agrees on when they first wake up.

"Coffee?"

Obito squints at him, "Only if you have sugars, masochist"

Chuckling, he makes his way to the kitchen. At least the sweet-tooth is still the same.

Obito left while Kakashi wash the dishes after the most bizarre and surreal breakfast in his entire life, barring none. His deceased-turned-alive friend thanked Kakashi for the food, took his Akatsuki robe that hung on one of the dining chair, and disappeared with a spiral twisting of space.

Idly, Kakashi wonders what power was that Mangekyou, and since his has the same shape as Obito's, whether its ability was also similar like that. He'd have to ask Obito about it next time.

For now, he has a report to submit, a challenge to accept, and an ANBU training to get to.

What Sandaime Hokage observe

Sandaime also noticed the changes he thought were temporary beginning to become a habit with the Hatake.

Sarutobi didn't point this out or make any allusion to it, but he's happy that Minato's surviving student stopped taking missions solo and can finally at least cherish his life a little more. What is a village if not for its citizens, shinobi and civilians alike? A dangerous mission is a given, being a military leader Sarutobi has no illusion about the power and unsavory things anyone in his position has to do to keep the fragile balance.

But in the first place, the purpose of a village isn't to send out their shinobis to die. It's for everyone in it to live and protect themselves as best as they could in the circumstances.

So when Kakashi seems to be more carefree these days, his shoulder doesn't slouch as much when he walks out in the open, and he's also no longer hunkering either in his empty apartment or among the dead from mission to mission, Sarutobi breathes a sigh of relief.

He even heard the Hatake has been reading that Jiraiya's porn in public and was late to a few non-important ANBU meetings. While he has misgivings about Kakashi's chosen reading material (and his own student's product of imagination), it makes him happy nevertheless to see Kakashi making some active choices for his own life.

Whatever the reason, Sarutobi can take the boon when the universe decides to be kind, and leave it at that.

The last mission that seemed to trigger this change was the S-ranked Kiri that Hound requested solo for himself. They only know from the ANBU's own report on what happened. Konoha guards received Hound's ninken summons who brought the information scrolls, and on 0300 hour the operative himself staggered through the village barrier with his uniform soaked in blood (particularly the leg and knee area), spooked two ANBUs on night-duty, reported his return and went home.

Maybe the mission was reminiscent of Team Minato's last mission involving Kiri and made Kakashi decide to treasure the life and memory of his comrades instead of drowning in his guilt.

What Kakashi observe

It's strange how his usually chaotic thoughts had settled.

There's an easy peace in his mind, a type of acceptance, and with that sorted he now can focus on the daily tasks and activities required of him.

He hadn't taken any especially dangerous missions solo again. Those were usually assigned to teams, at least a 3-people cell. But often Hound would decide to go alone, especially on recon or spying missions.

Because it was easier to spy alone, was Hound's reason.

Because Hatake Kakashi wants to die on a mission in the name of the village, was everyone else's thoughts.

All in all, Kakashi, for better or worse, seems to finally be living a normal shinobi life, even if he spend visiting time more in the cemetery rather than the Memorial Stone. The thing that Kakashi does notice is that, between him and Obito during these curious years, they never talk about Konoha. Their past is, understandably, off-limit. And also what Obito is doing.

Kakashi may trust Obito, but he's not illusioned with Akatsuki. He knows what Akatsuki and its members have been doing. Kakashi doesn't trust Akatsuki, but he trusts *Obito*.

Had Obito asked him for information on Konoha, or asked Kakashi to do a mission against Konoha, Kakashi would've obliged him. Obito said he's planning to save the world, including Konoha. Kakashi isn't idealistic or naive enough to think it can be achieved without sacrifice. He's the one who's been doing his village's dirty work for years for it to stay peaceful, after all.

Still, Obito never asked any sensitive information about Konoha and Kakashi never volunteered any.

It seemed the only actual change in regards to Konoha is that Kakashi no longer accept certain kind of mission.

Honeypots, for example.

After *that* mission in the Land of Hot Spring, there was an unspoken order that Kakashi does not do any more missions with honeypot on the table and considering how Obito reacted there, Kakashi thinks he'd like to **not** experience another Tobi triple-fuckening anytime soon.

It was easy enough to arrange, since Sandaime had always disapproved of him taking such missions the old Hokage was all too relieved to actually ask for Kakashi's reason when the ANBU commander reported the change.

Obito, also surprisingly disapproved. Which was unexpected considering how the Uchiha goaded him into murdering the target instead of harmlessly fucking him for the required information. Why should sex be worse than murder?

Honeypots are oddly easy for Kakashi. Because no matter what anyone says about his *actual* social skill, Kakashi is really good at pretending. Plus when something is part of his mission, of course he'd be good at anything it requires. Kakashi's not hailed as a genius for nothing. Even

in the unlikely field of seduction, Kakashi excels much to Tenzo's mortified suffering when his kouhai first witnessed for himself just how good Kakashi is.

Like any other shinobi skills, seduction is merely calculation in the emotional range. It's like calculating the trajectory of a thrown kunai, or the chakra control for a jutsu. When you need to take advantage of it, attractions have variables that can be broken down to cold, hard facts. Figure out the target's preferences, and then adjust your parameter to fit that. There's something for everyone, from hardcore kinks to vanilla fetishtic interests.

Kakashi isn't a prude. It's one of shinobis' weapon and he simply makes use of his body and skill. Being paid by Konoha to kill their enemy or have sex with them is all the same to him. When did he start thinking like that? He doesn't remember. Perhaps he always been since he dedicated himself to being a shinobi. Or maybe it was somewhere along the nth ANBU missions when he learned what he needs to do what he must.

As a shinobi he knows how the body works. As ANBU he knows *intimately* how the it works. The quickest spot to stab to kill or incapacitate, where to apply pressure to staunch blood loss depending on where the wound is, and what kind of motion he needs to do with his own body or where to hit that bundle of nerve to make his target surrender to primal pleasure.

The most important part of sex during mission is to pay attention to what please the target first. But when they somehow started to have sex during Obito's sporadic visit, Obito told Kakashi to also pay attention to his own pleasure. That with Obito, it *isn't* a mission.

So Kakashi learns.

And since he's an infuriating genius (according to Obito), Kakashi also learns what brings pleasure to Obito at the same time.

The synthetic side presents a novel challenge to stimulate. Obito said that he doesn't feel much in there, like when people touch you through very thick clothes. There are no nerve endings in the white substance that can respond to external stimulus, so the only possible sensation when Kakashi touched his right side comes from Obito's own emotional response.

But it was a different matter with Obito's cock. The Uchiha ran as hot there as their chakra nature.

He learns how to tease that part of Obito in a way that makes the older man swear profanities up and down. Kakashi quickly notice that he likes it when he could make Obito lose that rigid self-control he was beginning to get used to seeing on *his estranged teammate*.

He had conquered his gag reflex many moons ago thanks to a learning session with a very well-endowed male prostitute, but the only time Kakashi personally appreciates acquiring this skill is when he took Obito almost fully in his throat and surprising the Uchiha. Obito groaned, writhed, tugs desperately on Kakashi's hair, mouth couldn't seem to stop moaning empty praises and Kakashi's name as the latter brings him to finish without mercy.

And later, he learns that he likes it when Obito pushes him to the mattress, to the futon, to the floor, manhandles him to any position the older wants to do Kakashi on that day and takes him without much preamble. He could hear Obito's breathing becomes labored in his ear, feel calloused hands clawing into his waist as Obito slams his cock into Kakashi as rough and as gentle as the Uchiha's whims alternates by the minutes.

Sometimes Obito would use the other hand, the inhumanly-strong synthetic one that replaced Obito's real hand, to reach forward either to strangle Kakashi's throat or to lock fingers in a mockery of lovemaking gesture.

He can never guess which way it would go, which makes it half the fun of having sex with Obito. The way Obito fuck him depends on his mood whether to hate or love Kakashi on that occasion.

He almost half-jokingly said this to Obito: that if Obito, accidentally or not, kills Kakashi during sex, to please put his clothes back on afterwards at least. It would be hard to face Sensei, Kushina and Rin, but at least the body he left behind won't traumatize anyone who'd find it.

Almost.

- - -

On one of their last drinking sessions together, Asuma commented how different he is now.

Kakashi was unsure how to respond but Asuma pat his back in friendly manner, saying he's just glad Kakashi had begun to live for himself again.

He didn't smile back, but quietly thanked Asuma. His jonin friend looked taken aback, clearly expecting Kakashi to deflect with that lazy drawl he seems to be known for these days, but smiles easily enough knowing improved social skill or not, Hatake is still a reserved person.

On the way back home, along the empty streets of Konoha at night, Kakashi isn't as drunk as he put on a show. He walks slowly and thinks about the exchange and wonders about Konoha's opinion of him.

In the past years, he wasn't acting or pretending, he was truly just being himself. But it cannot be said that he was being completely honest with Konoha.

Living... he supposed what he's doing can be called living, isn't it? but Kakashi doesn't consider this living.

He's *waiting*.

The pain and regret from losing his team thanks to his own callousness is still be there.

The guilt of killing Rin and being unable to help Minato sensei and Kushina will always shackle his steps.

But his mind is free. There's no great burden in his shoulder clawing into him that he has to live no matter what.

There is a unique feeling of liberation from having voluntarily given up your ability to choose. It's neither good or bad, just the effect of such decision.

Kakashi imagines this is that strange calm only the dead, or those who had decided on their death, experience. He wonders if this strange peace was what his father craved, when the man was in his own world of darkness his son couldn't help him out of and finally gave in.

He might sympathize with his father a little, now.

Kakashi doesn't want to waste Obito's sacrifice with suicide. *Cannot*. But at the same time, he doesn't know how to honor it, not when his

own hand is drenched in his teammates' blood. So when he saw the chance, the best use seems to be for Obito's sake. After all, Obito wanted to see the future.

He'd broken so many promises already with his friend, so if he could at least help Obito really achieve the kind of future he wanted to see, Kakashi thinks he would finally be content.

Chapter End Notes

This is just a little of my own character study, but by telling Kakashi to live because Obito (sharingan) wants to see the future with him, Obito basically took away Kakashi's right to die. He became not allowed to die no matter how much he suffer (and boy did he suffer) because Obito's sharingan is there with him. It's kind of unfair to Kakashi. (i think what Obito did was very understandable but also has cruel repercussion.)

Whether we personally think life is better and suicide should be avoided, the basics of human rights is to have the dignity of choice how we want to live and how we die.

I'm not good with wording but in my mind it's basically a variation of "if you won't allow me to die, then tell me how to live"

So Kakashi also has selfish motivation in this fic!

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By the way, In previous chapter,
Kiri was still known as Bloody Mist Kiri because the 4th Mizukage a.k.a Tobi still reigns until Akatsuki seal the 3-tails.

So Hound's mission wasn't in shiny-reformed-Kiri. It was in Bloody Mist Kiri.

And that's why Tobi went after Hound. Because Hound was sniffing around in Tobi's village lol.

Technically, it was the actual friggin Mizukage who followed Hound.

i wonder what was in Kakashi's mind when he took this mission solo.

Maybe he was afraid he's going to Chidori a teammate again on the way back.

P.S Those interested will know what 'Tobi triple-fuckening' is after new year.

(Idyllic Years) Evisceration

Chapter Summary

“So if you didn’t give any information, and you didn’t act against Konoha during your..correspondence with this Akatsuki member, then what were you doing together?”

“Sex, sometimes.”

Chapter Notes

My titles are pretty accurate to what happens in it, actually.

Also thank you for your comments in previous chapters!! I'm happy to hear this fic gave that feelings heh.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's after dinnertime when Obito materializes in the living room.

“You’re still reading that trash,” is the first thing Obito said as a greeting, a single black orb side-eyeing Kakashi’s chosen romantic literature with obvious distaste.

"Yo," Kakashi doesn't get surprised anymore at his teammate's capricious visit.

Obito takes a seat at the dinner table. From his grumpy voice the Uchiha seemed tired, or bothered. Kakashi hasn't been around this new Obito enough to tell the difference. Child-Obito was really vocal with what he was feeling.

Kakashi snags a crumpled receipt for a bookmark and goes to pour tea for the sudden visitor. Two glasses of fresh mugicha, making sure he adds the usual amount of sugar in Obito's.

The older grunts a thanks and takes a tentative sip. Kakashi returns to his seat in front of him.

“By the way,” he opens conversationally, “I’ve been wondering about...” Kakashi opens his sharingan, knowing Obito would arrive at where he’s hinting.

Obito leans forward on the table, his gaze considering Kakashi. The

dark-haired man taps-taps the table with one gloved finger. A new tic.

“That’s right, I think it’s about time to...” the Uchiha mutters more to himself, gears clearly working inside his head.

Kakashi patiently waits until his teammate finishes whatever mental gymnastics he’s doing, and in a moment Obito seem to come to a decision.

“Yes, I think this is a good time, Kakashi.”

His interest in Mangekyou was part curiosity, and part wondering if the power in his left eye socket is something that can help Obito. He didn’t know if that’s something they’d want to talk about here, in the semi-public space that is his apartment inside a shinobi village, or somewhere else, so he just nods.

Obito drinks his tea in two big gulps. He stands up and offers a hand to Kakashi, sharp gaze booking no argument.

Kakashi looks at it.

Does...Obito intend to hold hand?

“Come on,” the Uchiha presses, oblivious to Kakashi's internal confusion.

In his defense, he doesn't know about the ridiculousness that is Obito's Mangekyou ability.

Kamui.

Obito said aloud when they materialized in a place full of white block structures for ground and an empty void for sky.

The ring around his thumb suddenly make sense.

So Obito can warp anything he touches into it. An entire *separate dimension* for a Mangekyou. Kakashi would've feel so done with Uchihas' ridiculous kekkei genkai if only he doesn't currently have one sitting in his head.

After a moment, Obito lets go of his hand. Kakashi's surprised his teammate didn't just chuck it away roughly. But then, he needs to stop constantly comparing this Obito with the old one, who would've get embarrassed so easily.

The older started pacing slowly on the block they're on. Kakashi follows his movement with both eyes.

"I don't yet know what forms of Mangekyou your eye might have, but I suspect it will be a variation of Kamui. I've never heard of Mangekyou possessing too different abilities. But then again," he turns to Kakashi and shrugs, expression twisting in a sardonic humor, "there're no records of an Uchiha splitting their sharingan, much less a Mangekyou."

"In theory, you should be able to access this dimension too. Just how, is the question." Obito put a hand on his chin.

That seems to be a thing with Obito now.

Thinking.

Interrupted by a realization, Obito snaps to look back at him, "Kakashi, does anyone know you have a Mangekyou?"

"No, I only realized it recently, before I met you in that forest. And in that span, I haven't had time to learn about it so I didn't try to activate it again."

That and because he heard about the blindness associated with the power. Kakashi recalls the surprise when he accidentally infuses too much chakra to the sharingan during training, and experiences a massive continuous drain to his resource pool. Wondering what's going on with the eye, he went to the nearby river and saw the tomoe shape has changed to resembling a pinwheel.

"Good. keep it that way Kakashi. As much as you can, keep secret the fact that you had Mangekyou."

Kakashi nods in assent. Keeping your jutsus secret is in shinobis nature anyway.

"I'll help you train it, after we figure out what it can do." Obito looks at him, serious.

Uchiha Obito, is now helping Hatake Kakashi train for a jutsu. What a

time they're living now.

He's still a genius. But no longer a stuck-up, haughty one. So Kakashi smiles and sincerely thanks his friend for the future assistance.
“Alright. Thank you, Obito.”

Out of all Kakashi had done, that took even this “new” Obito aback. He didn't comically gape like his coworkers did, but Kakashi imagined for this more restrained Obito, he might as well be. A widening of the eye and an unguarded expression of shock, mouth opening in a small flat o.

Kakashi sighed. Was his previous social attitude really that abysmal?

It got his entire team including the man in front of him killed (in a way), so yes, Kakashi supposes wryly, it was *that* bad.

- - -

Kakashi's Mangekyou, it turns out, was also Kamui.

Obito is very happy when they discover this.

On Kakashi's scheduled day-off from ANBU training, Obito came and warped them both to a forest clearing Kakashi doesn't recognize where, put up a genjutsu barrier around them that Kakashi does recognize functions to ward off any unwanted ears or eyes; Then Obito steps back, cross his arms, and “Alright, let's see what you got, Hatake.”

So Kakashi showed him. When he concentrates chakra to it, the Mangekyou spun alive and twisted away part of the trees in front of them. Obito tilts his head at that, disappears, and a moment later materializes with a piece of fresh leaf between his thumb and point finger.

“Long distance Kamui.” and that's the first time Kakashi saw this Obito looking genuinely giddy just like child-obito did whenever he discovered something cool.

Though his sharingan hurts from the strain (he might've poured more chakra than needed as a first time), Kakashi is satisfied for other reasons than finally finding out about the Mangekyou in his eye socket.

Happiness, Kakashi decides, is still a good look on his teammate.

Obito disappears the entire trees Kakashi practiced his Kamui on and before leaving, tells Kakashi to keep his Mangekyou a secret and perfects it.

Using Kamui itself is easy once he understood what it does, however the chakra drain is not. So what Kakashi has to train is his efficiency at the chakra control for Kamui. Luckily for him, chakra control had always been his forte.

Soon he fell into an easy familiar schedule with an unpredictable pattern to throw off anyone who might be spying on him. He accepts Gai's challenge when he has the time and energy, goes out for drinks and gossips with his jonin groups, does his mission and trains Mangekyou more and more efficiently in secret. Taking care to not overdo it too much that it lands him in the hospital because then he'd have to explain the chakra over usage outside of mission.

He'd also have to watch out for the creeping blindness, meaning this will be a jutsu to use only in dire situations. He won't be using it as part of his usual arsenal.

Once he gets a good enough grasp of both its theory and practice and certain he won't split himself in half, he decides to try warping himself into the dimension. He's doing what Obito asks of after all, so if he dies doing this, it's still within their promise.

He didn't die in the transport, but afterwards did almost get a heart attack when he saw parts of limbs appearing and disappearing in Kamui.

Ah, of course. That's how Obito evaded his Chidori after all.

He stabs a kunai with a paper bearing his chakra signature on one of the blocks to let Obito know he was there, and leaves the dimension.

Days went on like that; Train, work, eat, sleep, hang out with his fellow jonins when they hold their weekly gathering, talk with his not-dead friend when he visits unannounced, go on missions, rinse and repeat.

Before Kakashi knew it, the little shinobis had now graduated from the Academy and officially become part of Konoha's shinobi force.

This generation's of genin will have Minato-sensei and Kushina's son, Uzumaki Naruto (and also the Kyuubi jinchuuriki) and Uchiha Sasuke, (Itachi's younger brother and the last of true Uchiha still in Konoha). He wonders what kind of team they will form, and what kind of team they'll become. It wasn't this exciting back in his generation, when genins graduate under the solemn shadow of shinobi world war. When their first mission might as well be their last.

When it was time, Sandaime calls Hound to his office to tell the ANBU captain that he'll be taking away Team Ro's second-in-command with the Mokuton ability, Tenzo, to be the leader for the new genin team Uzumaki Naruto, Haruno Sakura, and Uchiha Sasuke.

There's no doubt on the reason; Mokuton has the bonus feature of suppressing tail-beast chakra if needed.

Hound himself has no opinion on the matter and bowed his head, accepting Sandaime's instructions. He feels the Hokage gaze linger on him for a while longer, before he was dismissed to bring the news to Tenzo, now with a jonin codename, Yamato.

“...Obito.” Black Zetsu’s raspy voice called out.

Looking away from his documents, Obito finds Zetsu lingering in the doorway to his lab. A hidden village doesn’t rule itself much less a major one like Kiri. While he’d like to leave everything to his puppet Kage, he needs to check that things are actually executed according to his demands.

“It’s time we start...collecting the beasts...Akatsuki is...finally ready.”

Obito thinks it over. They recruited their last member, Hidan, some time ago, and since then it has been many grueling shinobi missions and collecting bounties for the rest of Akatsuki, and planning for the tailed-beasts and political maneuverings for Obito.

Since Jinchuurikis are closely tied to their villages (mostly the Big 5 too), dealing with villages means shinobi politics. If Obito isn’t

careful, this could lead into an early alliance between the villages to protect their tailed-beasts, making his work harder.

“So we have. We’re still missing the identity of many jinchuurikis, but that’s something we can uncover as we advance the plan.“

Zetsu nodded

“They will have to be sealed in order too, which means, “ Obito groans and leans back on his wooden chair, “we’ll be starting with the Kazekage’s son right off the bat.”

What was that again about villages and shinobi politics?

White Zetsu chuckles at the boy’s antics. Obito is always entertaining when there’s no one else to see, “Let’s do our best ne, Obito.”

This is usually the end of any conversation he has with Zetsu. Anything that concerns their Plan. However Black Zetsu has another topic to bother him with tonight.

“What about..Hatake..Kakashi..?”

At Kakashi’s name, Obito piqued up, “What about him?”

“What part... does he play..in our plan?”

Ah.

Zetsu had been questioning his intention ever since that night he impulsively revealed himself to Kakashi. The plant-entity knows Kakashi is Obito’s last teammate, having been there on that momentous night of Obito’s life. At any rate both sides were finally convinced once there was no sign of Kakashi revealing Obito’s secret to the Hokage after time had passed.

Still that leaves the question for them: what does Obito intend to use his former-teammate for?

“His part will come later,” Obito’s attention returned to his work, “for now we’ll focus on the beasts.”

After Tenzo was taken off the ANBU roster to be a jonin teacher, Hound never recruited a replacement and so Team Ro remained in their reduced state. As an elite team directly underneath Hokage's orders, he can't be careless with who he picks to be part of his team, as such Cat's position will remain empty until the unlikely event Kakashi finds a suitable recruit.

It's not like they have many difficult work nowadays, his time spent mostly on training new ANBUs and doing routine checks on issues that bothers the Hokage such as Shimura Danzo's Root activities and Orochimaru's whereabouts.

He'd heard of Team 7's first mission in the Land of Waves. It seems disastrous first times won't be only Team Minato's trend. Kakashi doesn't know whether to laugh or cry at that. But at least Tenzo got all his students home safe and alive, if a little shaken.

Hound has been busy helping with Konoha's preparation of an inter-village event. Chunin Exams used to be held by villages individually, but since the war passed, more and more joint-exams are held in part to foster relations. It's both a stressful and exciting event for everyone involved, especially those taking care of the security measures.

"Worrying about your students, Tenzo? They'll be fine. You taught them well," Hound opined, perching on one of the branches beside Tenzo's head, who's currently watching over his Genin team practicing in the fields.

Uzumaki Naruto, Haruno Sakura, Uchiha Sasuke; Chakra powerhouse, medic with precise control, and technical prodigy. They seemed like the dream team, but then again, Team Minato seemed like the dream. All those potentials are nothing without the right teamwork to bring it out, Kakashi knows this from experience. The way Naruto and Sasuke bicker endlessly, and the obvious romantic, shall he say, tension between the three of them are worrying. But therein lies the difference: They're not currently at war, so perhaps these factors won't be as deadly the way it was for his old team. In times of war there's no room for mistake or discord no matter for children or adults. It's an unforgiving period.

Tenzo sheepishly rubs the back of his neck, still unused to the eye-catching green vests he now has to wear, and ever more so at getting praised by his (still, in his mind) taichou, "Senpai...please call me Yamato"

And because Kakashi is who he is now, he doesn't honor his cute kouhai's plea. At least not when it's just two of them.

"Senpai, how...are you holding up?" Tenzo asks carefully.

With their different lifestyles, it's hard to catch up with each other. And even if it's under Sandaime's order, becoming a Jonin teacher still means losing access to most of ANBU's information network. The additional consequence of that is not knowing what kind of crazy missions his taichou is taking nowadays.

"Maa i'm fine Tenzo," Kakashi drawls.

Though Team Ro's captain has mellowed a little these years, even before Tenzo got taken off ANBU, he's still worrying. Especially..

"..Senpai."

Kakashi doesn't want to hear his kouhai's mother henning anymore, "Tenzo you worry too m-"

"No, it's not that, senpai." More than the rarity of Tenzo's cutting him off mid-sentence, it's his kouhai's tone that makes Hound glance downward. Tenzo is still looking ahead, the picture-perfect image of a jonin teacher watching over students.

Hound knows this dance. Though it's been some time apart, Tenzo was his subordinate in ANBU after all.

They're being watched.

Kakashi may be the superior tracker, but Tenzo will always be the better sensor thanks to Mokuton. The man is practically one with the earth.

"Ah speaking of, we haven't really celebrated your becoming a Jonin teacher all these months have we? Before you're going to get busy with the exams, how about the usual place? My treat?"

Tenzo laughs in half-despair, shaking his head, "Senpai, you always say your treat but in the end you've never treated me to anything."

Kakashi eyes crinkles in a way that signals he's being a little shit, and pat Tenzo on the shoulder, "Maa there's a first time for anything, Tenzo."

And with that, Hound left the training ground with a shunshin.

Konoha isn't such a large village that you can disappear in it. Being essentially a military dictatorship, there's not many places you can talk in private. With how ANBUs are sent outside the village often, some of them came to have a favorite hanging spot they later visit as regular shinobis.

Kakashi and Tenzo have one such place. It's a family-owned lodging that doubles as a restaurant in a small village not too far out of Fire Country's border. Many travelers come and go. It's a good place to eat, rest, and most importantly, talk without any particular ears listening.

It's a fairly large building, with the second floor serving as the lodging part of the business, and the first floor the eating part. What makes it their favorite hanging spot is the taste of the food, and the shared memory of when they stumbled upon this establishment on the way back from a long espionage mission. It was closing time, yet looking at wounded, starving shinobi-ANBU-in-disguises, the kind owner had let them in to eat before they pitifully slogged home in the cold winter.

Ever since then, Hound and Cat made it a habit to frequent it when they needed to get out of Konoha and hang out together away from prying eyes. Though rotating disguises so they never let the owner know it was them.

Jonin sensei doesn't have much freedom in going outside the village without reason, so now Tenzo and Kakashi can only meet on Tenzo's day-off.

Kakashi arrived at noon on-time, (the busiest time for the restaurant), having transformed himself into unassuming shinobi once far away enough from Konoha. There's already someone at his and Tenzo's usual table. After confirming each other's identity, he takes a seat and has the waiter take their order.

"So?" Kakashi gets to business as he removes his scarf in a routine, practiced motion. It's spring, but still chilly.

"It's Root." Tenzo looks morosely at his drink.

Kakashi's movement never pauses. "Ah. And what do they want with you now?"

Tenzo shook his head, "Not me, you."

“Me?” That..was new. Ever since the last debacle, Danzo never approached him again. After Kakashi had firmly chosen to side with the Sandaime, “What does that old fox want this time?”

“I don’t know, I’m cut off from Root and even ANBU, remember?” Tenzo said not entirely without bitterness, “I just noticed in the past months that there are Root agents sometimes watching you. I know because I followed them and..well they went back to the passages leading to Root headquarter”

Kakashi feels a fond exasperation at the fact that Tenzo is still looking after him even now. Really, at twenty six years old he’s a well-functioning adult shinobi. Admittedly the ‘well’ part is a recent development, but is he the type that makes people worry that much?

“Senpai,” Tenzo’s tone suddenly became pleading, “you’re not doing anything...are you?”

Kakashi considers this. There are only a few reasons he can think of why Root is getting personally interested in him right now. Either Danzo is getting antsy about his sharingan, or someone saw him with a Mangekyou (unlikely, because he picked his time & place) or... Obito’s visits.

The other options, there’s no problem. But if this is caused by Obito’s visit, then..

He wonders why no ANBU, though. If Danzo had shared his misgivings with Sandaime, Kakashi could expect a summon soon or perhaps.. -ah no. Kakashi remembers the odd exchange with the Hokage when he ordered Hound to take Tenzo off the roster. Kakashi didn’t think about it much afterwards, but viewed in a new light, it could mean...something.

Sandaime already knew of Root’s suspicion, hadn’t he?

He smiles the fake cheerful smile that he knew infuriates everyone expecting a serious response, that should shine even through a transformation jutsu.

The effect is immediate, Tenzo is pouting now.

“Maa, i’m sorry for worrying you, but it’s just my personal life, nothing for you to get antsy about.” he knew that won’t satisfy Tenzo, but there’s nothing else he can say.

“Senpai!”

It's not like he had actually done anything detrimental to the village itself, having never even spoken about Konoha with Obito. (and Obito had never asked) Still, Kakashi needs to find out the root(ha) of their suspicion, or it'll be just a matter of time.

But in the principle of things, ever since that night, he knows his loyalty no longer fully belongs to Konoha. He still doesn't know where Obito's is, but because Obito had said "the world" and not "Konoha", it's safe to assume Obito's is to his own cause.

Either way, this is something Kakashi expects to happen. He just didn't imagine he'd be taken by surprise, as between him and Obito, again, nothing substantial regarding Konoha has happened yet. And he had been very careful.

He'd have to apologize to Tenzo one day, if he got the chance. Which, to warn him of the action their village is taking, his Kouhai really trust him.

He'd *really* have to apologize to Tenzo. Perhaps buy him a lot of walnuts, A basketful.

The waiter came with their food and left. Tenzo is momentarily distracted because it is lunchtime.

"Tenzo."

The chopstick Tenzo was holding broke into uneven pieces as Hound just casually broke undercover protocol.

"Thank you for telling me." Kakashi doesn't know whether he can also convey sincerity through the face of a stranger, but it seemed Tenzo got it nevertheless, if the shaking in his hand and slump of his shoulder is any indication.

"Senpai.. Please, take care of yourself." His kouhai isn't the type to pry.

They ate in companionable silence and after actually treating Tenzo like he said he would, to the amazement of his kouhai, Kakashi left earlier. Tenzo now stares at the empty chair in front of him.

Kakashi's gratitude is practically a confession for..something, Tenzo doesn't know yet. But he's resigned. He doesn't regret telling, after all Kakashi was the one who saved him.

Still, whatever taichou is tangling himself with, he hopes it's a misunderstanding or just Root being Root.

Akatsuki lair, opening a piece of paper stuck nonchalantly in a tree somewhere.

“Did you see a hound?”

- - -

Days later, a crow knocks on the Hokage’s office window.

“N”

Like everything in a shinobi's life, things happen swiftly without warnings.

One second Hound was sitting in Team Ro's locker room, preparing to go into their scheduled training session, in the next (exaggeration), stripped of his sword and porcelain mask, he's now sitting restrained in the bowels of Konoha's infamous T& I. 2 Special Jonins flanked by 4 ANBUs had came in and after dismissing the other members except Tiger who'll act as witness to their taichou, they informed Hound that there's an immediate summon for him under so-and-so accusations.

Ibiki Morino, the head of Konoha's Torture & Interrogation is standing imposingly in front of Kakashi. Next to him, Yamanaka Inoichi , looking conflicted but determined. Behind them, on the spectating area, Sandaime Sarutobi and Shimura Danzo with 2 squads of ANBUs each guarding the Hokage and councilman.

Either Konoha has amped up their precautions protocols, or they're just wholly convinced Kakashi is a traitor and is going to do his best to escape or attack them.

Which was ridiculous to Kakashi because he's not going to do anything. After all, he has not been *ordered* to go against Konoha.

Ibiki's gruff, commanding voice boomed around the dreary walls.

"Hatake Kakashi, ANBU Captain, codename Hound. Before we brought you here, you have been informed of the allegations made against you of colluding with a member of terrorist-mercenary group, Akatsuki. And knowing this charges, you have come willingly, correct? "

Kakashi, who's currently sitting chained to a metal chair and with a chakra seal slapped on his sharingan, nods.

"Correct."

“And what do you have to say for yourself?”

There's a Yamanaka, Kakashi doesn't see any point in lying or deflection. Besides, Konoha is part of his loyalty club too. Just not *the* Platinum member anymore. Plus the fact that they brought in the Sandaime, means they've gathered enough evidence to arrest him. It was Obito's sporadic visit, after all.

A part of Kakashi's brain that loves puzzle-solving, is happy that this mystery is solved. Not that he ever got the chance to actually be one, but Kakashi wonders if this is what those double-agents feel when they're finally caught? Besides acceptance, there's relief that the game of cat-and-mouse has ended and they can finally ask the cat: 'what gave it away?'

“It was true that i've been in contact with an Akatsuki member.” he paused, letting the word sink in because while Danzo looked triumphant in the narrowing of his lone-exposed eye, Sandaime looked like he had aged 20 years in an instant and Kakashi genuinely worries about the Hokage's health. He calmly added if only to assure the elder, “but I did not give any information concerning the village, nor execute any mission that harmed the village through this period of interaction.”

Ibiki's jaw stiffened. If he could do so without consequence, he'd roll his eye. They're all veterans here, Kakashi doesn't need torture to cooperate in an interrogation by *his own* village.

“And do you mind telling us the reason you are in contact with an Akatsuki member?”

“That Akatsuki member was the one who saved me on the way back from my last Kiri mission, 5 years ago.”

Half-truths, in a way.

“So if you didn't give any information, and you didn't act against Konoha during your..correspondence with this Akatsuki member, then what were you doing together?”

“Sex, sometimes.”

That earned him a scandalized gasp from the audiences; A few of the standing ANBUs coughed behind their masks, and Sandaime looked like he just swallowed his pipe.

“We also.. drink coffee? Um, afterwards,” Now that Kakashi realizes it, were those all he and Obito mostly did in these years? Sage. It had been peaceful years, more than he ever deserved.

Even the stoic Ibiki looks like he needs a moment to recover. Everybody here knows Cold Blooded Kakashi, Friend Killer Kakashi, Kakashi of the Sharingan. Maybe they have a hard time imagining ah, well...

“You.. *cough*- Surely you are aware of what Akatsuki is, are you not, Hound?”

Kakashi shrugs as much as his chains could allow. Of course he knows Akatsuki. But the one he’s been in contact with is Obito.

“A terrorist-mercenary group, that have acted against Konoha’s interest in the past and may do so in the future. Yes I am aware.”

Ibiki’s eyes narrow, “And despite knowing this you still maintain your..relations..with the Akatsuki member? Even so far as letting them inside your own apartment?”

“I did not give them the barrier passcode, if that’s what you’re suspecting.”

Kakashi knows they’re getting to the heart of the matter. Soon he won’t be able to evade with half-truths.

Being head of T & I, Ibiki wasted no time lunging straight for the throat, “And you don’t think about notifying the village that someone, an Akatsuki member no less, could breach the village’s barrier with minimal detection?”

Well of course he can. It was Uchiha Obito after all. A former resident of Konoha, and one registered as one of its deceased heroes.

Hound did **not** fidget in his bond. “I understand that. But because of our meeting under ah, the circumstances, we’ve become very close and i-um. Since they only came to- well...”

Mentally, Kakashi said goodbye to the few acquaintance-friends he had in Konoha, the Icha Icha Innocence inside his ANBU locker still unfinished, and mostly: his reputation.

But it might be better to end this story looking like a smitten fool than an outright traitor.

Because despite everything his loyalty to Konoha is genuine; it's just that to him Obito is part of what's left of *his* Konoha and thus superseded everything else in Kakashi's hierarchy, even this current Konoha. He knows in the scheme of things and what Obito might've had him done, he's practically a double-agent. Just one that curiously hadn't had a chance to harm the village, yet.

Looks like it embarrasses his audiences more to hear his words than for him to utter it. He can see some of the ANBUs' shoulders straining in their effort to not make a noise. Bless their soul, Tiger, Bird. Of course they're the one snickering at Hound.

Out of the categories of audience here: a Hokage, a councilman, interrogators, torturers, special jonins, and ANBU squads, his fellow ANBUs have the loosest moralities. Sure they're loyal, and they do missions for the village. But they also do the not-so-legal ways to unwind and relax. At times, with their kind of life, it was the only way distractions can work its magic. And they'd know light fraternizing with the enemy has its own thrills. Truthfully, the personality for ANBUs are comprised of either hardcore fighters or death seekers. No prize for guessing which category Hound belongs to.

Ibiki is massaging his temple, a sign that he's having a massive headache. He's talking slowly to Inoichi, who, despite not knowing what kind of face to wear during Kakashi's 'confessions', starts getting more serious by each minute and nods here and there.

Kakashi imagines past-him would've cursed Obito for putting him in this position, no, past-Kakashi wouldn't have been put in this position at all. But right now, all Kakashi feels is amusement that he can still make light in this situation.

The past years he spent in Konoha, although under a different kind of sword hanging over his head, he couldn't say he didn't enjoy it. It was only thanks to Obito's absolution that night that he could even have this brief window of contentment.

Given the option, would you pick a lifetime of darkness, or a short, bright life?

Kakashi thought he was going to slave away in the abyss of Team Minato's tragedy until he either die in a ditch during a mission, or worse, becoming useless and waste his years. But he got to meet Obito again. Got to read Ichcha Ichcha series, eat more of his favorite broiled saury and eggplant miso, and have those trivial yet interesting chats

with his friends and coworkers each day. He got to enjoy the little things in the remainder of his life, and even his death too, would be of use, most importantly to Obito.

Because he wants to protect Obito's identity.

Tenzo might've given him plenty of time with that warning, but Kakashi had been prepared for this eventuality ever since he made the choice to put this life back in Obito's hands years ago. The very night after Obito's first visit in Konoha, Kakashi had implanted a preemptive measure on himself in case of sudden arrest. Nevermind ANBU, he'd be a pathetic *shinobi* not to.

Kakashi smiles behind the cloth mask they graciously still allow him to wear. A sign of Konoha's clemency in consideration of his service record, surely. Most suspected with treason wouldn't get this kind of rather civilized treatment even for a first trial.

His mind is clear and his heart is light, because soon he'll be free of his failures and in the process give back to Obito a little for everything his friend had done for him.

Using his most formal voice, Kakashi entreats his interrogators, "May I please have a moment with Ibiki san and Inoichi san? The rest of the ANBUs and guards can stay, but please, the others.. " his gaze fell on the Hokage, pleading.

Sandaime looked grief-stricken, but quickly concealed it with practiced composure. Sarutobi sighed, and with no words for Kakashi, the old Hokage left the building followed by Danzo, and a few of their personal guards.

When the higher ups have left the room, Kakashi's gaze returns to his interrogators. "Ibiki san, Inoichi san, please step back."

Their eyes widened. The ANBUs all spring into stances, humor discarded. Still the understandable show of distrust jabs at his pride a little. He just told them to *stay back*, not come closer.

"Maa, maa, don't worry, I'm not going to hurt anyone here," Kakashi whines, sounding too petulant for a chained suspect.

Ibiki's glowers at him, experience as Interrogator clean over any previous amusement he might have felt before. The air in the chamber is heavy with suspicion.

Yamanaka Inoichi however, tries, “Kakashi, we just need to get the identity of the Akatsuki member you have been in contact with. I believe when you said you hadn’t done anything against Konoha.”

Inoichi had always been a perceptive man. Although, there’s nothing he can do because what he needs to do is the one thing Kakashi is trying to prevent. Kakashi smiles sadly, not for himself, for those who still try to believe in him.

“Inoichi-san. I know most members of Akatsuki are our enemy. However, this one saved my life. I’m not asking you to understand my motivation. But it would do them a great injustice that by saving me, it puts their own life in jeopardy instead.”

Inoichi steps forward, but was stopped by Ibiki’s arms barring him, “We’re not trying to kill them, we’re just identifying the threat-”

“I know Inoichi-san, but others would.” Kakashi sighed, it seems he won’t get to apologize to Tenzo after all.

Concentrating on the chakra already inside his body, Kakashi focuses on the seal he put on himself and ducks his head down.

“What are-”

Kakashi assures them, “Ah don’t worry, this won’t hurt..anyone else,”

Taking a deep breath and closing his eyes; With a snap of chakra, the last thing Kakashi heard was an explosion, a cacophony of shouts, and the tell-tale sound of a rift in space tearing open behind him.

Chapter End Notes

It's good no one knows about your Mangekyou, isn't it Kakashi?
Because Obito was 100% going to kill them to keep the secret.

Walnuts are Tenzo's favorite food according to his wiki.

Also about timeline:

I had to compromise and fasten the timeline with Akatsuki capturing 1-tail while Gaara's in Chuunin Exam age. So the Garaa in Chuunin Exam will be less insane i guess

He'll be alright. After killing Sasori aided by other Suna shinobis, Granny Chiyo will revive little Gaara who'll mellow after he gets

some sleep and then be Kazekage.

Suna however, will conceal the fact that they've lost their tailed-beast. So nobody in Konoha knew of this incident.

In canon Rasa (Gaara's dad) died around Chuunin Exam arc, so in this fic, he died fighting Deidara and Sasori who successfully captured the 1-tail.

I won't needlessly suspense anyone here, Kakashi's fine.
But it is #Missing-nin Kakashi from here on folks!

(Suture) Discourse on Liberation

Chapter Summary

This is one of the stories Hound left behind among Konoha's ANBU death repertoire:

Hound had an Akatsuki lover.
And Hound committed suicide to protect said lover.

Chapter Notes

Thank you for your wonderful feedbacks and also questions in previous chapter!! I enjoy reading and answering them. And please don't hesitate to ask question if something about the story so far confuses you. I didn't subject another soul to become a sounding board so what made sense in my head might just be utter baloney to everyone else.

We're also starting to get into Akatsuki territory. And i want to inform about their modus operandi in this fic in case it confuses:

Without exception the tail-beast has to be sealed in order of tails. So Akatsuki will hunt ordinarily from 1 to 9. It works for my timeline and plot reason.

I also make Akatsuki actually have to work for their information.

Jinchuuriki's identity are top secrets. While canon understandably cut out the boring part to focus on the main teenagers, In Akatsuki novel Konan had to search the whereabouts of the 4 tail from informants.

So Akatsuki in this fic is more like the novel, where they have their work cut out to hunt the beasts.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Head pillow on one hand, Obito glance at the body lying on the slab beside him.

Most of the damage is sustained in the stomach area. Kakashi's ruined uniform is stored in the lab and he had dressed the patient in a medical gown, with a new cloth mask in place as replacement for the

torn one.

Obito tried his best to not look at Kakashi's face when he changed the cloth mask; During their private time together or when its owner removed it himself is one thing, but concealing his lower face to a ridiculous degree is something Obito's teammate still insists on doing in daily life. He doesn't feel like dealing with the pinpricks of wrongs at infringing on that privacy now. Kakashi was unguarded like this because he was trying to protect Obito's identity, his mask.

The explosive seal Kakashi implanted on himself was located along his stomach. When activated, it'd have the same effect as disemboweling. Just with an explosion instead of a blade.

Obito snorted.

He hadn't known Kakashi had a penchant for dramatic death, but he supposes, like father like son.

And Obito being who he is, he loves having multiple layers of backups. The spare Hashirama's Cells he had always prepared in case of his own emergency came in handy, as he was able to cultivate it to save Kakashi's life in time.

The ANBU armour did a really good job keeping most of Kakashi's stomach contents, though spilled at least mostly contained inside. Obito blinks at the train of thought. Now that may be why Kakashi had placed the explosion in his stomach instead of say, neck or head, despite those being the surer location to terminate his body; Maybe it wasn't to follow in Hatake Sakumo's footsteps but rather a more pragmatic solution to not make a mess of himself...literally and traumatize his coworkers further with the gory visuals.

Well whatever Kakashi's actual reason for placing the seal there was, that decision saved his life and made Obito's task marginally easier. He only had to use Kamui on the armour and get to work on the torn flesh underneath.

Obito watches as the patient's chest breathes in and out in a steady beat.

Kakashi's consciousness hadn't returned, likely from immediate shock and blood loss; but Obito knows the cells are doing their job. All he has to do is just wait until Kakashi wakes up, whenever that is.

At the moment Kakashi's physical condition is stable; The IVs are

getting the necessary nutrients to his body, and Hashirama's Cells are working to repair the damaged organs and tissues. He also already put a barrier around this lab and blocked off all entrances to prevent unwanted intruders while his teammate is still unconscious; The only way to enter and exit is through Kamui.

Seeing as he'll have to leave the patient to his own device, Obito hopes Kakashi doesn't trash his lab should the Hatake wakes up before he comes back.

Hidan and Kakuzu have captured their target and Zetsu has already transported the body to one of the hideouts; so right now he has a 2-tailed chakra beast to seal with the rest of the Akatsuki.

Shaking his head at the sight of Kakashi's pale form, he transports himself to Kamui and leaves the patient to rest alone in the enclosed space.

To the Konoha public it was announced that jonin Hatake Kakashi died while on a solo-mission, and since there were no Hatakes left to lay claim on their last member, Konoha took over the funeral ceremony.

The service is what you'd expect for a shinobi who died during a mission, except there was no body to bury thanks to the standard Body Disintegration Jutsu every ANBUs had on them; Instead of a grave in the cemetery, Kakashi got a newly-carved name on the memorial stone.

Kakashi's last will did not state any other beneficiary beside Namikaze Minato, so as the son of the last Namikaze in the village, Uzumaki Naruto is set to receive whatever Kakashi intended to leave when he comes to adulthood and his status as Namikaze (and jinchuuriki) can be revealed to the boy. But until then, the village froze Kakashi's assets including his finances and the rights to the old Hatake Compound.

Since jonin's housing belongs to the village, Kakashi's apartment was

cleared to be reassigned to another who may need it. His personal belongings both from his apartment and ANBU locker were carefully tagged and sealed inside storage scrolls to be placed among other lonely possessions whose owner would never claim them again inside Konoha's Archive Office

The team tasked with securing the Hatake's earthly possessions were a little taken aback to find the decorated Copy-Nin had so few effects, despite his surely prospering bank account thanks to all those S-rank missions. He has no room decorations beyond what came with the apartment, no what can be called "personal outfit" outside uniforms and some plain clothing, and no personal items such as what might be his 'favorite' cup or the like.

It was as though everything in his home was there strictly for their function. A simple mug for drinking, a table for eating on, a neutral-colored blanket for sleeping, and so on.

The apartment didn't look drab despite its spartan furnishing, yet it also doesn't look lived in by a person. It's clean and neat, but that's all there's to it. Like something you'd see when you first move in; a space ready to be turned into a home, except in Hatake Kakashi's case he never...did. There's nothing in this room that can tell you what its owner was like, his hobby, or even what his favorite colour. It was completely devoid of traces of personality.

Despite that, there's one place that held things of great personal value though none of these items really belonged to the owner himself.

Inside the last drawer of the jonin's writing desk, once you pull it open, you'd find 4 items inside and then you'd probably figure out who the last inhabitant of this apartment was (and consequently why it was the way it was).

The items laid carefully among each other are: An outdated orange kids' google that although clearly had faded with age, was somehow *still* the brightest and most colourful thing you'd find in this entire apartment.

A small grey box, and even without opening it was clearly a medical-kit. The design and date indicated it was issued back during the times of the Third Shinobi War.

A distinctive three-pronged kunai any Konoha shinobi would recognize as belonging to the Fourth Hokage Namikaze Minato.

And lastly, an old picture frame placed carefully a little further back in the drawer. With a careful gloved hand and despite the yellowing paper, you could still see 4 faces smiling (and glaring) back at the camera.

It was not your place to guess who are the other faces smiling in the picture beside the young late Hokage and jonin, so with a professional manner, you tagged the picture before letting it join the rest of jonin Hatake Kakashi's few material possessions inside the storage scroll.

With that, ends the collection of the deceased shinobi's personal effects by Konoha's archival team

The ANBU collection team tasked with taking care of Hound's belongings went in a similar manner except instead of being kept in the village's official records like the ones in Archive Office, deceased operative's effects are stored in ANBU's own building.

What does it mean that the one thing can be said as Hatake Kakashi's own personal belonging as a human being is found not in the place he comes home to, but inside Hound's locker.

But masks and questionable literature was not all Hound left behind in ANBU. Unlike material possession and unlike Hatake Kakashi, Hound left behind something intangible that can never be physically collected into a storage.

A story.

This is one of the stories Hound left behind among Konoha's ANBU death repertoire:

Hound had an Akatsuki lover.

And Hound committed suicide to protect said lover.

ANBUs can be horrifyingly romantic sometimes.

“It’s just my personal life, nothing for you to get antsy about.”

It is when you were in a sexual relationship with an Akatsuki member, Senpai! Tenzo internally screamed in the hilarious desperation of it all.

Tenzo is on his 5th cup of sake listening to Tiger while Boar's arm is of little comfort around his shoulder. He had heard of Hound's death, of course, but not the details. That, came from Tiger and Boar who sought Tenzo much later afterwards. They spilled everything that happened the day Hound died to the only Team Ro's member still out of the loop.

Due to the nature of the trial and Hound's own position in Konoha, great care was taken in ensuring the secrecy surrounding his death. It was a typical measure after an ANBU's demise to lock away any details regarding the missions they undertook as it could very well still be valuable information to the enemy, especially the higher-ranked captains whose track-record included politically sensitive issues. Everyone who wasn't Team Ro was informed that it was a confidential matter and that was that.

4 months have passed since the official announcement but Tenzo heard Maito Gai hasn't given up on irritating the administrative offices with his pestering details on his rival's death. Not even Sarutobi Asuma with all his connection as the Hokage's son was able to get more than what was already issued; And nobody gets anything from Hound's Team themselves. The whole issue was sealed tight as a tailed-beast.

Given the kind of mission his senpai undertakes, death during one isn't impossible *it's actually the expectation*, but Tenzo knows there is more to this, him being the one who tipped Hound off regarding Root's attention.

So there he is one evening, in his apartment on a day-off, mulling about the possibility of there being foul play from Root when there's a knock on his window.

Boar and Tiger in their full ANBU uniforms are cheerfully tapping his window, waving 3 bottles of sake and plastic bags of something. Snacks, likely.

Even after he got taken off the roster, his fellow Team Ro still hung out with him at times. Following protocols, they don't divulge mission secrets and Tenzo understands that, but just because Tenzo was suddenly assigned to a different career doesn't mean they stop talking with him anymore. Cat, Boar and Tiger are friends, basically.

He opens the window with an unimpressed stare leveled at the pair of troublemakers immediately clambering inside with excited giggles -

what's the use of a door- and soon the three of them are sitting cross legged in his room as Boar placed a barrier in place in case someone overhears. It's not perfect and the fact that they're meeting in Tenzo's apartment is obvious, but Tenzo suspects anyone in the village who can bypass ANBU's barrier would be high enough in the command chain and already know the truth anyway.

As Team Ro's witness to their captain's interrogation, Tiger was physically present when Hound blew himself up. Because apparently Hound didn't die on a mission. It was during a questioning in the depths of T&I.

T&I. Kami. That's... *not* Root then.

To put it mildly Tenzo was bordering on hysteria when he heard that Root wasn't tailing Kakashi for insidious purposes or anything related to illegal children experiments; It's just that Kakashi was caught hooking up with an Akatsuki member *inside* the village.

How did **that** even happen and although they're in Akatsuki what kind of shinobi even...with.. Wait, was that Kakashi-senpai's type then? Dangerous missing-nin. Wait *Tiger mentioned sex?*-No. Kouhai will *not* be going that route.

Can you even imagine anyone in bed with Hound without Chidori being involved immediately afterwards? He can't, but apparently Kakashi-senpai *did* refrain from roasting his terrorist partner's heart with his personalized S-class lighting jutsu in bed judging from their continued rendezvous. That's great, and he should've had more faith in senpai's socializing skill, but Tenzo is *still* not going to go there.

Tiger is cackling as they retell Hound-taichou's casual admittance complete with voice reenactment. If he was present in the trial Tenzo thinks he might actually cry not because of what happened next, but because the image of aloof Kakashi senpai in his head...

Sighing, he returns his attention to Boar who's gesturing for his empty cup to pour them another round.

They're not...sad, in a way.

Yes they're sad that their captain is gone, of course. But those that could pass the preliminary to be recruited into ANBU have a different mental fortitude. Even more so Tenzo who was Root and succeeded in that graduation ritual of throwing away most of his emotion (although Kakashi always manages to induce something that remained in him).

Mostly worry and exasperation, but at times, admiration)

Rather than grief, it became more of a story to tell among Team Ro.

Hound wasn't dishonorably discharged. Maybe it was partly in consideration to Hound's personal standing in the village as ANBU captain with almost a decade of service, Fourth Hokage's pupil, and also the simply oxymoronic concept that is *Hatake Kakashi* betraying Konoha, but everyone (except perhaps Danzo) does believe Hound did not divulge village secrets to the Akatsuki member. He just... fraternized with the enemy a little *too* enthusiastically.

"Maybe the sex was very good," Tiger snickers, remembering their *taichou* fidgeting in his chained bond.

Boar smacked Tiger over the head, but also giggled.

Cat feels like screaming.

Still, Hound chose to die because while he's on the side of Konoha, he also didn't want to betray his savior even if said hero is on the side of the enemy.

From Hound's confession, he strongly implied that he would've died all those years ago in his solo Kiri mission had it not been for this Akatsuki member who saved his life. And Hound didn't want that, saving his life, to be the reason the member's identity was exposed.

The sex was just bonus, it seems.

This is also the aptitude of those who were chosen for ANBU in the first place, this flexible mindset.

As the ones who execute the type of work that don't necessarily align with the shiny, clean principles publicly lauded by their villages, they know *-walked* the infinite greys that stretch in-between the black and white.

And really, 'enemy' is too strong a word for Akatsuki as it implies a direct or personal conflict. They're a menace, sure, but they're basically a mercenary organization. As far as ANBUs were informed, Akatsuki doesn't specifically target Konoha. They're dangerous to *everyone*. And they do what makes them the most money, usually bounties and missions smaller villages outsource to them due to various reasons; lack of manpower or simply the distasteful nature of it. In a way it's similar to how Konoha's Hokages assign the unsavory

works to their ANBUs instead of the more pristine and morally upstanding jonins and chunins office.

So those in ANBU understand painfully well that just because someone is on the other side of you, it doesn't always mean they're a bad person. In a slightly different situation, most of ANBU operatives could end up on the more unfortunate position of missing-nins or terrorist. Often they can see themselves in their opponent.

Such a scenario could happen.

Try to imagine:

Alone and with vicious Kiri Hunters hot on your tail with the specific intent to kill -and strong as he was, we all know Hound-taichou's chakra reserve was never the largest; Then! When all is almost lost, being saved by a powerful stranger who just happened to be nearby, but you recognized them belonging to an elusive mercenary organization

This Akatsuki member has no reason to help either Kiri or Konoha. If they were hired by Kiri, this member would've attacked Hound-taichou. And Konoha had never hired Akatsuki.

After a desperate battle for your life aided by this rather charming terrorist-who-you're-unsure-you-can-trust, there would've been a conversation -or since Hound-taichou disliked talking during mission- at least a sharing of gestures; a nod of acknowledgement, or a hand offering the wounded help to stand up, i don't know- some form of interaction. Or, or maybe even playful flirting, likely from the Akatsuki member because I think Hound-taichou would've stabbed first before speaking.

But anyway since taichou made it back to Konoha without signs of genjutsu manipulation or blackmail because his psychological profile actually improved almost immediately afterwards, we can assume it was a successful courtship. And he found that even if Akatsuki, they might not be so bad. Hey everyone needs to make a living somehow.

But there's still their life to worry about, right?

So they made a pact. To not involve their work or the villages. In their time together, the Akatsuki member won't harm Konoha, and the ANBU won't pursue the missing-nin. That this is strictly a relationship of bodies between two people who hit it off and found that they don't mind talking or touching more with the other.

Now who's to say such, admittedly, extremely precarious forbidden affair

can't blossom between an ANBU captain and an Akatsuki terrorist?

-or something like that; Tiger might've been following their late taichou's footsteps in reading too much romance fiction.

Very much regretting listening to Tiger because now he has the visual of an Akatsuki member seducing Kakashi senpai in a dark Kiri forest, Tenzo down his full cup in one go, hoping he could drink enough to forget the obscenity he just been forced to imagine and Boar closes their eyes heavenward, praying for the patience to not stab Tiger at their fantastical scenario that also corrupted Boar's own image at their indifferent and cool taichou.

While a tipsy Boar snips at Tiger like an overly-critical editor '*Oi why did the Akatsuki member have to be charming? Why would a terrorist be charming! You're making the terrorist too likable!*' And Tiger growling defensively at their scripts, passion now fueled by alcohol '*Of course he is! Do you think Hound-taichou would be impressed by anything less!?*'

Cat levels a deadpan stare at both ANBUs now completely lost in their fictional storymaking.

It seems Tiger had decided on the sex of his Akatsuki member character. How interesting.

Agh stop it about sex.

Shaking his head at his bickering friends, Tenzo lays back on both hands to think about what Tiger just revealed.

It might be outrageous to say this but.. he's... kind of relieved that Kakashi-senpai managed to be with someone he found compatible enough to have continued relations with, however brief -or fatal it was.

Tenzo was at least glad that Kakashi didn't perish during a mission like the man seemed to have craved before or that he didn't die painfully in the enemy's hands. As far as ANBU are concerned, Hound's manner of death could be considered a blessing, given how other personnels usually end their story. There's a reason they taught various suicide techniques in the case of capture and had mandatory Body Disintegration Jutsu seal tattooed on their body because those'd be infinitely more merciful in comparison with what enemies would do to an ANBU in their hold.

Being what he is (ex-Root) Tenzo was never able to feel much

emotionally, but it always broke what's left of his heart to watch anytime Hound leap at a chance of a dangerous solo mission out of the village; Or even when he comes home successful, there's a small look of disappointment in Hound's dead stare then. And after a forced hospital visit and rest, Kakashi would be at either the cemetery or memorial stone, just gazing emptily at cold marble.

Everyone has their own personal lives and nobody, however well-meaning, has the right to intrude. Still, he feels as helpless as Kakashi's jonin friends and empathized when one of them, Kurenaisan, he came to know now as fellow jonin teachers, smiles sadly at Tenzo -Cat then- before tipping her chin at Hound's direction with a 'Watch his back, yeah?'

Kakashi was the one who gave him the chance to become a person again after Root, but Tenzo knows he's not the person who can save Kakashi from his own darkness. Maybe not one person in Konoha can, given how solitary Kakashi was and the significant amount of emotional baggage he had with the village. Everyone knows him as one of his titles. To the ANBU he's their superior, to the rest of Konoha, take your pick: Cold Blooded Kakashi, Friend Killer Kakashi, Hero of Sharingan, White Fang's son, Fourth Hokage last student, et cetera.

Even to Tenzo who's arguably the closest thing to a talking-companion, Kakashi was someone who saved him and he admired and thus they're, in a way, will never truly stand at the same 'place' as a peer would. Peers who *grew up alongside him* and *knew him*. Nobody could view Kakashi as simply himself, except perhaps those whom he had already lost.

Tenzo know glimpses of Team Minato story from Kakashi himself, in one of the rare moments senpai talked about his past. It wasn't much but certainly more than what the official records which simply stated who was the leader and list the member's name and skill as well as when each member except Kakashi died soon after one another. Kakashi talked more about what the team was like; how he was the arrogantly uncooperative one, how Nohara Rin was the ever patient peacemaker and dedicated medic, how Namikaze Minato was a good - if at times too playful- teacher, and how it was Uchiha Obito who taught him the importance of teamwork and comrades, gave his sharingan, and then saved Kakashi's life at the cost of his own.

Kakashi didn't give more details other than that, the man rarely talk about his old team as is, but that he did this time at *Kinoe's*

termination from Root and Tenzo's inauguration to Team Ro made him suspect it was more to teach the important lesson Kakashi learnt at such a high price so that Tenzo won't repeat the same mistake rather than about Kakashi opening up to someone.

With the unconventional personality of one who became a missing-nin like this Akatsuki member, maybe that's the kind of person who can handle Kakashi's brand of social interaction along with the complicated past that shapes his present attitude; and who could charm Kakashi in return with their own life story. The proof of that, well, what happened... *happened*, didn't it?

And so, the starting-to-get-drunk Boar gathers the already-drunk Tiger and still-brooding Cat in their arms, what remains of Team Ro toast to their late taichou.

One of the strongest shinobi even among ANBU ranks, a respected leader to their team, a member of Konoha's citizens, and an honorable friend.

Also the teller of the more interesting ANBU death story in the end.

Really, ANBUs can be horrifyingly romantic sometimes.

"Ahaha patience is a virtue, but it has its limits too... Your patience may be in that exploding bag, Deidara-senpai."

"Shut the hell up, you bastard!"

Tobi had been annoying Deidara throughout the simultaneous sealing of the 3-tail and 4-tail. This time rather than to enjoy the kid's short temper, he's just still irritated that his Mizukage pawn in Kiri had

been thwarted via a *stolen* byakugan.

For shame.

Sure, they needed the 3-tails and that cannot happen without killing his puppet Kage, but Tobi wasn't expecting his genjutsu to be discovered.

As one of the strongest existences in the shinobi world, a genjutsu on a Kage much less a jinchuriki is unheard of. And therefore, unanticipated.

So after Kiri uncovered his manipulation he expects that village will be turtling itself in from outside interference while they conduct *years* worth of internal investigation and placing tighter prevention measures against the same mistake in the future.

Even without that, starting now Akatsuki's work will get much harder.

They still haven't figured out the identity of the 5-tails jinchuriki though Zetsu said he's working on it. And they were able to mask their activities up until the 4-tails ironically because of the highly political nature of the first and third one combined with the relative obscurity and freedom of the second and fourth one.

Suna had changed the narrative so that Akatsuki's attack on their village was seen as a kidnapping attempt at the Kazekage's son mainly for money rather than for the tail-beast inside him.

It's not hard to see why they had done it; It gives the appearance that Suna still had their tail-beast, which the other villages believed seeing as Gaara was alive (the sand shinobis led by Sasori's grandmother had managed to steal the kid's body back; and after killing Sasori, the grandmother had brought Gaara back to life at the cost of her. Who'd have imagined. You really can't underestimate old shinobis, they are the survivors from previous wars after all.)

When Tobi saw that, he initially wanted to make it so that the 3-tails looked like a successful assassination job on the corrupt Mizukage; It was just his cursed luck that byakugan-thief discovered the truth at the last moment and broke off his genjutsu. The only saving grace being Kiri was weakened by internal strifes during Tobi's reign and Bloody Mist is distrusted by most villages, so it's not like that would throw much wrench to his plan. It'd take time for them to stabilize themselves, and to reestablish any foreign affairs with other villages should they want to share their findings.

If they haven't already, Kumo and Iwa will bound to notice their 2 and 4 tails have also gone missing.

It's not like he's expecting Akatsuki to work completely unnoticed. That'd be plain unrealistic seeing as one of their members is a mad bomber artist, while the other is a murder-trigger cultist who left distinctive ritual marks on a surface anytime he kill, but it'd be good to stave off spotlight from their actual objective for as long as they can.

But if he wants to be honest, it's mostly thanks to the strained relationship and general feeling of distrust between these villages that they hadn't talk to each other and connected the dots; But by the tense atmosphere within the ones that encountered Akatsuki and subsequently lost its jinchuurikis and the rumours circulating outside, there are already suspicion of something else going on behind the seemingly random attacks.

And soon, Tobi spare a glance at Itachi's hologram form whose impassive face betrays nothing, there will be another loose Uchiha canon that may or may not go according to plan.

It'd be rampant chaos before he can bring everything to peace.

Truthfully Tobi loves the journey as much as the destination.

Sure he wants to go to that world of dreams soon, but he also enjoys the planning and watching said plans at work even if sometimes it backfires immensely on his face.

Or on his back.

He remembers with a wince of that time he set the Kyuubi loose in Konoha, despite having the chance to preemptively seal it for Akatsuki's future use. And what the Fourth Hokage did to his spine afterwards in return.

It's not efficient, but what can he say? Sometimes you just want to watch something else burn to put out the fire inside you.

Obito wasn't expecting any good news for the moment, so when he phased through the walls sealing off the lab he had expected to see the usual sight of Kakashi's body laying where he'd left him. Instead Kakashi is sitting up, staring blankly at his stomach.

He hadn't seen his teammate move in almost half a year, but Kakashi always prompts something in Obito to jab.

"I never knew you to want flashy explosion death, Hatake. Maybe you and Deidara should have a chat before we set out."

Tempting as it was to see Deidara subjecting Kakashi into his deranged art discussion, Obito's fairly certain that after determining he's in no condition to shut the artist up or escape, Kakashi would force himself to pass out most likely by making himself have an internal bleeding again and Obito isn't that bored. *Yet.*

Kakashi doesn't appear surprised at his sudden entrance. He merely glance in Obito's direction with that lazy half-lidded gaze.

Well, connected to the IVs is a tube of morphine, on top of everything else.

"You're alive and this isn't the afterlife or whatever delusion you have in that brain of yours, if that's what you're wondering." Obito dismisses. He has no patience if Kakashi wants to entertain that line of thought.

Putting his mask aside, Obito approaches the sluggish patient to make him drink water from a bamboo container. Kakashi is either still too out of it or trusted Obito, because he wastes no time questioning before placidly swallows the liquid contents empty.

"How does your body feel?" He mimics the clipped no-nonsense tone medic-nin uses to snap their patients attention into habit. The effect is the same here.

Kakashi doesn't feel any particular painful spot, but his muscles are weak from his ah- *sedentary lifestyle* for the past months. Internally he doesn't feel sick, just aching all over. His chakra is also there and there's no disruption or broken pathways, but he can't draw any to perform jutsu (because of the seal Obito placed to prevent Kakashi from breaking his lab should Kakashi wake up in panic)

All in all, alive and healthy for someone who had exploded their own stomach.

And regarding his fighting abilities, just like Obito's own experience, nothing a little intensive rehabilitation session won't recover. Kakashi is lucky his rehab won't be overseen by an ancient, moody clan patriarch wielding a scythe. He'll get the moody clan descendant, instead.

Obito nods at all the information, gives Kakashi chakra paper to do a test on, and tells Kakashi he's going to release the chakra seals before doing just that.

"Now try using your chakra again."

The white sheet wrinkles.

"There. Seems you can still electrocute people, Hatake,"

Kakashi's only response is to send a withering glare in his direction.

Obito went around to stop the morphine drip. He needs Kakashi to recover complete faculty to talk.

When there are no complaints of sudden pain from the patient, Obito takes his seat again and Kakashi turns his body slightly so he can face Obito without straining his neck.

"We'll have more time to talk after I get back in a few days, and you'll need to rest too. But for now we can cover the basics."

And so Obito explained what he did to save Kakashi and the changes he can expect from his body now.

Obito had used Hashirama's, *yes Kakashi the First Hokage's cells i know you already knew of this*, Cell to repair and replace most of the damage his explosion caused. Kakashi doesn't have as much as Obito does, but it's enough that he won't need as much food or water like before. It is convenient, being part-plant; He does still have to eat, though.

Obito doesn't think Kakashi will gain Mokuton with the relatively lesser amount of cells he has; and since it's an unstable release anyway, maybe that's the better outcome.

And perhaps a solution to Mangekyou. Since Hashirama Cell's main feature is its regenerative ability, it seems Kakashi won't have to worry about blindness so long he doesn't activate his continuously like Obito does.

The water helped, but Kakashi's throat feels raw from disuse .

"Obito there's also... ", he tries speaking while Obito is inspecting the white skin now circling his stomach like a snake, "My chakra...feels there's more than usual."

Obito stops prodding, and Kakashi can see he's using sharingan to check.

"Oh right, it boosts that too. Yes it seems you won't pass out from chakra exhaustion so often now. Congratulations, Bakashi," Obito patted his shoulder patronizingly.

Had Kakashi the strength to move, he'd have swiped a kick at the damned Uchiha. It wasn't his choice to be born with a small chakra reserve. His genius made up for it, in his humble opinion.

Sadly he hasn't tested both his muscle and chakra control yet, and he doesn't want to accidentally kick the IV stand. The various medic-nins Kakashi was indebted to for taking care of him until now would have his head if he treated a life-saving medical instrument with such disrespect.

That's all right. Kakashi mentally adds a note to his to-do list once he regains his dexterity.

Petty revenge is a dish best served cold.

Obito decides there's nothing more they can discuss about Kakashi's immediate physical condition. Not until they can test how far his muscles had deteriorated during the recuperation period and develop a training regime to fix it. And with that, he moves to the next point of discussion.

Sitting down again, Obito puts both hands together over his crossed leg and keeps his tone light.

"Now that we've established you're not going to keel over anytime soon, care to tell me why *you* tried to break *my* promise, Kakashi?"

Your life belongs to me.

Kakashi stiffens, eyebrows frowning as he formulates his answer. Thoughts come easier now that his brain isn't swimming in

painkillers. He did have his own reason.

“...I didn’t have the time to tell you. At first, I didn’t know whether it was my Mangekyou that piqued Root’s suspicion or not, so I couldn’t leave you a message either.” he pauses to swallow, “There was a Yamanaka in my interrogation. They were going to discover your identity, Obito.”

Logical. As expected of Hatake, *except...*

Obito glowers, irked at the thought of Kakashi treating him like he’s still that dumb kid, “Even Yamanaka would need a lot of time to sort through your memories, Bakashi. I know you knew that as well.”

Kakashi went silent. He *did*.

So Obito cut straight to the point, “Why didn’t you wait for me? I know my visits are unpredictable, but once you’re in T&I, I’d have known Konoha was on to you. You know I can appear in that building and get you out easily.”

Eh, he knew the **exact** second Root and Konoha was onto Kakashi and had been monitoring the escalation on the sideline.

Honestly, what happened *before* Kakashi’s explosion-assisted-harakiri was part of Obito’s plans.

It’s endearing -and useful- to see Root counting their detection of his sporadic visit to Kakashi apartment as their own achievement. Obito would’ve been a piss-poor spy if he wasn’t able to cover his tracks while infiltrating *his own* old village.

The moment was ripe. Akatsuki had completed their members and finally began the most crucial phase toward Infinite Tsukuyomi, starting with the 1-tail. And with that, it was time to move the piece he has in Konoha as well.

Everything was according to his plan, it’s just that Obito had sorely miscalculated Kakashi’s response.

Obito’s first miscalculation was.. well not so much as a misjudgement

of character, but Kakashi didn't expect Obito would come to his aid.

And he would feel a sting on his pride at that, had he didn't come to understand Kakashi's point of view.

Obito even feel he had belittled Kakashi by having the gall to ask why he didn't wait for him, why didn't he expect Obito to help. In the recess of his mind, there's renewed respect for this beaten and jaded teammate of his who turned out not to be quite so broken after all.

Because how commendable it is that from the start, Kakashi had never intended to depend on Obito for his decision of betraying Konoha. **At all.**

Kakashi might've been *severely* emotionally compromised at the time of their meeting in Kiri forest, something Obito had taken into account and counted on for the duration of that interaction; But the fact that he prepared the explosive seals before the arrest and used it without hesitation proved that Hound had made his decision of pledging loyalty to Obito not on a guilt-ridden whim, but rather in sound mind and complete awareness of its future consequences.

Kakashi took full responsibility for his own choice without expecting Obito's involvement or saving him.

Looks like the dark clouds he observed hanging over Kakashi have blinded *Obito* into thinking his teammate had become feeble with guilt and Kami was he proven wrong so spectacularly.

Obito's second miscalculation was thanks to him misjudging Kakashi's character in the first place, he did not expect Kakashi to take such drastic measures right away. Not even in Obito's wildest prediction that of all Kakashi's possible reactions, the Hatake would immediately pick *Deidara's* favorite method of 'suicide by explosives'.

Either betray Obito and talk, or keep silent until Ibiki tortured him enough or more likely, until Yamanaka probed his brain long enough to arrive at the revealing memory, or even try to escape. Those were the options he expected. Again he was (perhaps subconsciously) underestimating Kakashi's resolve to discard Konoha for him from the beginning, and that's why he didn't think suicide was an option.

During the interrogation Obito knows Kakashi was wary of the Mind Reader. But as he said earlier, Yamanaka's technique needs time to

sort through Kakashi's memory and arrive at the point where Obito's face is revealed. It's not an instant technique and that's why Obito kept his visit short and masked once Konoha had started their monitoring. Kakashi knew enough to call him by 'Tobi' whenever he had his mask on.

So in Obito's (flawed) theory, Kakashi should have a few weeks to a month at least for it to start getting into dangerous territory for him.

They *had time*. And in that span he was going to monitor Kakashi's progress.

If there's an inkling that Kakashi would talk, then Obito would know for sure he can't factor Kakashi in any future dealings.

If Kakashi didn't immediately talk at first, his plan was to let his teammate stew in T&I a bit to gauge for Kakashi's breaking point or at least until Yamanaka gets dangerously close.

It was admittedly very risky and Black Zetsu very much disapproved of it, but it was worth the risk to him. He needed to prepare his contingency plan right now for the future, or it'd be too late and all of the hard work, blood and sweat he committed to realize Infinite Tsukuyomi could mean nothing in the end. Obito had learnt the value of having the umbrella before the rain comes.

On the day of the arrest he was loitering hidden in the T&I building to observe the procedure.

Kakashi was in his ANBU uniform, looking remarkably calm with that lazy half-lidded stare as he was ushered into the interrogation chamber. Since Obito knew in advance there won't be any corners to hide inside, he had Zetsu split a clone to monitor the proceeding from within the walls and another stayed outside to update him on the trial in real time;

Zetsu told him in half-disbelief that Kakashi wasn't spilling and the plant-entity looked utterly perplexed when Obito asked him what Kakashi said next. Not long after, he saw the Hokage and Danzo came out of the room with their guards. Obito, thinking they'll continue the interrogation at a later time, planned to also leave when he heard an explosion and shouts from inside.

Putting two and two together (helped by the fact that Zetsu hissed 'Hatake exploded himself!') aided by the clone inside to guide his trajectory Obito immediately uses Kamui before Kakashi flatline, all

the while blood rushes to his brain and his mind was internally swearing to Kami about *his* own trials and tribulation of dealing with suicidal teammates.

From Rin to Kakashi, and even his own child-self, all of them.

But there's the heart of it all isn't it. Obito can curse Hatake's suicidal sense of duty all he likes, but he'd be hypocritical to because it was that exact trait which gained him Kakashi in the first place.

Why didn't you wait for me?

"I can't- risk that, I don't want to-", Kakashi is heaving now, his sight at Obito is unfocused as he drowns in the kind of pain morphine can't help, "-fail you again," voice barely a whisper, but Obito heard it. Kakashi's hands on his laps are twitching and Obito knows he wants to scratch at it. To get the blood off.

And he understood, It was not only him Kakashi meant by failing; it was the entirety of Team Minato.

- - -

Obito levels a solemn look at his teammate.

Go back to Konoha, he had said that night to Hound.

He knew he had captured one of Konoha's strongest piece on the board. But before it can be used, he'll have to move it all the way to his side of the squares. In the first place Obito's purpose with Kakashi is not in Konoha; Yet even though he's pretty certain Kakashi would leave on his own, Obito still needs a crucial guarantee.

Like any good brew, important plans require time to mature.

So he made use of those idyllic years.

While Akatsuki is recruiting members one by one and strengthening their foundation for the hunt, Obito simply observes as Kakashi gradually relaxes and returns to a semblance of normalcy thanks to his words that night and the peace the world is experiencing right now. ‘Madara’s promise to Itachi aside, on top of not touching Konoha itself Obito also reduced his meddling with Fire Country.

He had intentionally let Kakashi mentally and emotionally recover to see if that’d sway this wayward hound into another pack of friends who welcomed him with open arms, or would Kakashi stay true to his pledge toward Obito’s promise.

A declaration of intent made during one’s darkest, most desperate hour is one thing; but to see whether it would persevere through the easy comfortable times as well. That is what Obito needed to know before he could recruit Kakashi.

While it’s true that Kakashi didn’t tattle to the Hokage all these years about Obito, he wanted to see what Kakashi would do once he’s put at actual odds with Konoha.

To do nothing and keep the status quo is easy, but what about when the chips are finally down?

What will Kakashi do when it comes to the choice between Obito and his village?

This is also why he didn’t place any restrictive seal on Kakashi should he reveal about Obito’s survival and current identity to others, and this apparent ‘lack of foresight’ was something Black Zetsu berated him as well.

But there’d be no point then. What’s a gamble without risk? As matter of fact Kakashi *needs* to know that he’s free to talk, to betray Obito should he wants to.

In short, Obito snapped an invisible collar and then voluntarily let go of the leash to see where Kakashi chooses to go in his freedom.

It should have been me in that cave. This life and this eye was supposed to be yours.

He doesn't need anyone solely driven by guilt. Like what he had seen not only with his teammate (albeit mistakenly. Obito can admit that now) but other and stronger shinobis as well, guilt makes them weak-minded and susceptible. Anger like Nagato's is more useful for his purpose, or even cynical idealism like Kisame's.

From his own words Kakashi seems burdened by what he one-sidedly perceives as life debt to Obito. Obito himself never sees it as such. It was his own decision and he didn't save his teammate for something in return, that's *ridiculous*. And the eye too as far as Obito is concerned, it's Kakashi's.

If nothing else, the Mangekyou certainly was Kakashi's own power. The sharingan Obito gave him back in the cave was a 2-tomes sharingan; he didn't even know Kakashi also possessed Mangekyou before the ANBU inadvertently showed the ability when he pinned Tobi to the tree. (*And wasn't it also a testament to Rin's own skill as a medic, how the transplanted sharingan works perfectly to Kakashi's chakra pathway to the point it can awaken Mangekyou? In a way Obito can see the best of them in Kakashi's sharingan. Kakashi's friendship and determination that led him to losing an eye for Obito, Rin's dedication and care for both of them, and Obito's own willingness to sacrifice his life for his friend. Back when this worthless reality hadn't tore all three of them apart in different ways.*)

And regarding his failed promise, it was Rin's own decision to commit suicide. Obito isn't stupid or blinded by rage enough to blame Kakashi for killing her when it was Rin herself who jumped in front of Chidori. What Obito blamed and rejected instead is this hell; for putting Rin in the position to resort to such extreme decision, for cruelly forcing Kakashi to be the instrument to the horrifying act that made him fail his promise.

So Kakashi owes Obito nothing and he suspects maybe deep down his teammate already knew that and this is merely Kakashi's own distorted way of lessening his personal demons, by helping Obito.

But regardless of Kakashi using him as a coping mechanism, Obito is also not averse to making use of anyone he can right now. Given what he'll need Kakashi for, his options for candidates are already extremely limited. After more consideration, objectively Kakashi is a great asset to have on his side if Obito can trust him.

All of this culminates in Obito finally taking the step to prove or disprove the gamble he took those years ago in Kiri forest, by letting

Root and subsequently Konoha discover his and Kakashi's liaison. For the sake of getting an answer to that big if.

And here it is in front of Obito, the result.

Had it been merely guilt that drove Kakashi to Obito's side, he would've still been loyal to Konoha. Once cornered and left with no other alternatives, no more option for safe silence, Kakashi would still sided with Konoha in the end; While maybe he won't outright expose Obito, but he'd leave hints and perhaps even ask Konoha to help bring Obito back or something equally ridiculous.

No, it wasn't out of something weak like misplaced guilt that could make Kakashi rather die than betray his comrade.

Loyalty.

With this he had ascertained Kakashi's allegiance.

Obito... loves the journey as well the destination.

He'd be lying to say he didn't enjoy those mundane days with Kakashi, days Obito also could relax from pretending to be Madara but not completely alone in Kamui.

There are plenty of moments when he genuinely appreciates Kakashi's company. Even back then he had seen how he could be friends with Hatake after all, when Kakashi came to save him and they started working together. Obito finds that they actually can communicate once they stop fighting all the time.

Although he still couldn't trust Kakashi with his plans just yet, but during their time together he did begin to wonder what it's like to fight alongside his teammate again. Though he had been quick to squash that thought away, not wanting to hope when disappointment was possible in the end.

It had been a long and (on Obito's part) at times anxious journey but still filled with many good moments that Obito himself didn't know he could feel delight in. Ever since seeing the world for the hell it is not

many things could give him joy, but sometimes Kakashi surprises him.

But while Obito truly didn't lie when he said he enjoyed passing those years with Kakashi, it is always nice that once the long path ends, his plans arrive at his intended objective.

Concealing the satisfaction that bubbles at this conclusion, he left Kakashi to wallow a little bit inside his own head and once his teammate seems to return back to the present, Obito stands up.

"You didn't." he said, looking straight at Kakashi, "You didn't fail me, Kakashi. Thank you."

Underhanded schemes aside, Obito's gratitude is genuine. Right now it can be said Obito is at his most sincere with Kakashi so far.

While Obito had discarded most of the useless moral principles for the sake of completing his Plan, he still values loyalty in high regard. Even after everything he's been through *and put others through*, his ideals still stands.

Those who break the rules are scum, but those who abandon their friends are worse than scum.

Nowadays he's much more selective in choosing, but Uchiha Obito **never** abandons those whom he counts as his comrade.

Kakashi's eyes widened.

Up until Obito's 'death' and even after that, all Kakashi could do was fail his friend. Thus he didn't know how to respond to such a foreign occurrence except that Obito didn't seem to be expecting any. The older man turns to take something from the drawer on the wall.

A porcelain mask and a set of clothing.

He put the bundle of fabric on the edge of the slab and the porcelain mask he handed it to Kakashi, who looked down to promptly recognize it as his ANBU mask.

"Konoha has labeled you Killed-in-Action. You've been posthumously discharged, in honor." Obito is still standing close in front of Kakashi, one red eye intent on reading his teammate's face and reaction.

Kakashi strangely feels nothing rises up at this news. The most he felt

was sorry for the friends who still believed in him. For him, Konoha hadn't been *Konoha* ever since Minato sensei and Kushina died. What's left of his *Konoha* is right here, in front of him.

"Of course, the true circumstances including the allegations and interrogation leading to your death have been obscured. One of the biggest Hidden Village can't afford to have rumours of their decorated ANBU captain colluding with an Akatsuki member become public knowledge." Obito sneered remembering the great lengths *Konoha* went to hide their scandal. It involved the fabrication of an entirely fictional mission Hound supposedly died in.

"ANBU has retired the Hound mask indefinitely in your honor, but... he traces the white porcelain Kakashi is still holding between pale fingers, "I admit I've become quite fond of it."

Obito feels a little heady at the piece he just gained.

A critical agent for *his* own plan. A hidden player on the board unknown to anyone or anything else except him. And Obito would know how powerful that can be, being the prime example of it.

He presses closer to Kakashi who's still looking down at the mask. Taking care not to put too much pressure on the wounds, he places a light kiss to the top of Kakashi's head and ruffles the soft silvery strands a little.

And when Obito speaks again, not even years of acting experience could completely rid the breathy exhilaration in his voice.

"It might be time I get to use you, Hound."

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy just in case I want to assure people first.

In case Obito's level of manipulation worries you it'd stay that way, i poromise obkk dynamic will change.

This fic is about Tobi AND Hound. That's right, they're partner in every meaning of that word.

I wonder if Obito know he'll be the subject of *Konoha* ANBU's

hottest love stories collection?

The anonymously penned novella “The Totally-completely-the-author-swears-by-their-Tiger-mask Fictional Tragic Romance of an ANBU Captain and an Akatsuki Member Who Saved His Life” became a hit among ANBUs.

(Tenzo set his signed copy on fire when he received it.)

Yeah i HC the fire tattoo ANBU has is the seal for mandatory Body Disintegration Jutsu that completely destroy the ANBU's body upon death. I didn't made it up btw. [here's wiki on it](#) (this was also Kakashi's consideration on dealing with Obito's gift/his sharingan after death so it doesn't fall to wrong hands.)

And yeah Obito took Kakashi's original mask. The one in Konoha is a fake. I'm a Hound simp, but Obito's may just be the biggest Hound simp in this fic.

Also yeah it's Obito lab where he brought sasuke in later canon. Obito astutely deduced that perhaps it's unwise for Kakashi to wake up to rows of eyeballs staring at him. So he moved that personal collection to his other labs elsewhere. Kamui is such a convenient technique.

The piece Kakashi/Hound corresponds to would be Rook.

In shogi, once the Rook arrives at almost the other side of the board on the enemy's side, you can promote it to Dragon a.k.a the most valuable piece after the King.

Obito's canon ring was 玉, the (challenger) King in shogi it's just too good to pass up heh...the Dragon to the Mastermind..g-get it?

Lastly, in case you missed it I've written a one-shot intelude to this series titled [Bloodbath in the Land of Hot Spring](#)

It's the honeypot mission where ch.3 said Tobi and Hound had their first time with each other.

I made it sound romantic, but it's not at all.

It's Tobi's triple-fuckening.

Anyhow hope you enjoy (?) this utterly manipulative Obito while it last, and feel free to leave comment to tell me if there're parts you like or confuses! ❤️ □

(Suture) Discourse on Mass Suffering

Chapter Summary

Damn the Hatake's plummeting reading taste.
He went from the genius who traded fuuinjutsu scrolls with the Fourth Hokage to reading Jiraiya's questionable porn fantasy.

Chapter Notes

Thank you for your comments and questions in previous chapter!! I have also replenished my mental sanity enough to be able to reply to everyone's earlier comment. Life's hard. Sorry for being late, but thank you!! At the time, the knowledge that people likes the story really cheered me on to continue writing the next chs!

> By the way here's my favorite thing about ANBU and their loyalty:

First and foremost, ANBUs are loyal to the Hokage who hand-picked them rather than the village itself. (see Anbu wiki)
This is why Danzo's ROOT are loyal to him, and they would attack fellow Konoha shinobi.

Kakashi's loyalty is to Obito first (his Kage), and Konoha second (the village) ahaha.

> Starting this chapter forward, there'll be explicit smut in some of the future chapters. (# Established Relationship).

> This chapter is way longer than before so i'll tell you in advance what you're about to spend some time reading.

Suture arc covers Kakashi's recovery period, so there is not much action. We give the man a break since his stomach is still wobbly.

Chapters are called 'Discourses' because I intend it to be mostly dialogue (or monologue works too) establishing obkk's principles that will be their driving force until the end.

In Liberation we dissected Kakashi's main motivation. It was Loyalty.

So in Mass Suffering we will now dissect Obito's + finally get to know what Obito had in plan for Kakashi.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After their brief exchange, Obito told him to get back to resting until he comes back in at most 2 days.

Kakashi won't need to worry about sustenance or air supply and even going to the bathroom. All his body had so far are nutrients-rich fluid that gets broken down efficiently by the implanted cells. And being part-plant, it'd be a long time before he actually needs food to survive; about a week should he refrain from expending any energy.

So stay. put. You're not ready to stand yet and do not undo months of my hard work or so kami help me-

Then Obito left and here he is. Staring at the room apparently he had been laying unconscious in for almost half a year. It's an enclosed space with no visible exit nor entrance because of course Obito wouldn't see the problem with that.

On the left, there's a wide wall decorated with rows of empty cubicle windows and an Uchiha emblem on top.

Before leaving, Obito had covered the metal slab he'd been laying on with a more comfortable futon after Kakashi woke up.

And wasn't that a surprise when Obito manhandled him while using Mokuton to slide the futon under him. Kakashi had blinked like a deer in headlight, frozen in place, when without indication of what he was going to do beside warning 'Keep still, Kakashi', Obito then casually scoop him him up and held Kakashi firmly against his chest until the living branches finished with the impromptu bed. There was no teasing from the Uchiha, not even a slight change on the older man's expression; the man's movement was focused on not jostling Kakashi's wound too much and concentrating on puppetting Mokuton to do the rather delicate task.

Kakashi was still at a loss of words when Obito then lowers him on the futon and continues rambling about what Kakashi should and not do while recovering, like nothing outrageous just happened. He dumbly nods at his friend's stern warning to *Not. stand. up -Oi Bakashi are you listening to me?*

"Yes. Don't stand. Use Kamui if something happens or I need to contact you. I'm listening," Kakashi's mouth automatically repeats what his ears had heard.

Obito huffed, knowing Hatake was merely parroting instead of actually listening; But he has learned his lesson to not underestimate his teammate. Even if in Kakashi's case it seems otherwise, a shinobi knows their body best. He had given the genius all the information he'll need to take into account and is sure Kakashi won't do anything (too) stupid.

Kakashi barely registers as his friend then puts his orange mask on, and disappears into his spiral rift while muttering something about being late in meeting Deidara and how the kid is going to blow a fuse.

Either he lost a lot of body weight, or...

Remembering Tobi casually snapping someone's spine with his bare arms some odd years ago, Kakashi swiftly decides it's not him that's the problem.

Beside his makeshift bed and the IV stand from which needles are still jabbed inside his veins, there's wooden furniture everywhere. From the rough shapes, Obito's carpentry with Mokuton clearly needs improving; maybe he should introduce his friend to his kouhai one day.

There are what looks like medicine cabinets, bookshelves populated with old-looking tomes and scrolls, a large drafting table in the middle of the room, and the single chair Obito dragged close when they talked earlier. This space is obviously intended for a single occupant to work in.

Obito mentions air supply and indeed Kakashi notices there's air currents and the place doesn't smell musty.

His observation is limited to what he can see from his position, so he turns his attention to the set of clothing Obito placed on the slab earlier.

With the hand free from needles, Kakashi grabs at what turns out to be a black robe with red cloud patterns not unlike what Obito was wearing just now-

Well.

At least now he knows where Obito intended to have him be.

- except this one has an additional hood connected to the collar.

His friend must've really wanted to keep Kakashi's identity hidden. He

could just dye his hair or something if they want to be extra safe. He'll bring it up to Obito later.

Underneath the robe is his standard ANBU uniform, with the arm guards. It's good that Obito procured these for him because ANBU equipments are designed to be grades above normal standard; he could still remember the times these metal guards and steel-plated armour saved him.

However, these items are not what Kakashi's attention was focusing on.

He slowly opens sharingan, just to check whether what he was seeing is hallucination or not.

No, it's not.

With both eyes, his own and gifted, Kakashi held his breath as he locked on a conspicuous rectangle object so at odds with the dreary color of his uniforms and this entire setting.

A new, store-bought Icha Icha Innocence is sitting there in its lurid orange glory

'Love' is not a word Kakashi ever needs to use much. Even during the most intimate of their sexual moments, he and Obito never say anything remotely close regarding each other.

But when he saw that little book still bound inside its pristine plastic wrapping, sitting nonchalantly between an Akatsuki robe and a Konoha ANBU uniform, Kakashi almost, *almost*, blurted it out loud.

From Pein's base of operation, Tobi looks down at the rest of Ame's industrialized townscape below. He's perched at the edge of the tower's arched window and it being the tallest building in Ame, one can see the winding path of various water channels leading the water into the large lake that surrounds this small, secretive village.

The constant wetness reminds him of Kiri's humidity, but in Ame's

case their weather doubles as a spy detector. Though he doesn't know if at the moment the rainstorm is natural or Pein-made.

He came here after Deidara's death earlier today, to discuss with Pein and Konan about the next stages of their plan now that Akatsuki's power had been almost halved. And also mentioning his new partner who'll work with him from here onwards.

Tobi enjoyed his time with Deidara. The kid was a firecracker, and so much fun to tease. And until the end, Deidara stays true to his word; however annoyed the bomber artist was at being forced to join and work with Akatsuki, in his end Deidara was a loyal contributing member and died showing the world his ultimate art.

While Obito never understood the kid's artistry and never see explosions as a form of art, he can appreciate that dedication even if it cost Akatsuki yet another strong member. And a good tease. He'll miss annoying Deidara and flying around on those funny clay birds.

"And you're not bringing this..partner of yours into Akatsuki's ranks?" Pein's question brought him out of his reverie.

If she has any, Konan opted to not contribute her opinion on this topic of new partner but trains her impassive gaze on Tobi.

"I am, though his case is different. He'll move with me but he won't be required to participate in the sealing. I plan to limit his involvement to hunting the tailed-beasts now that our number is down to half. Besides," Obito laughs, almost fondly, "he hates being in a crowd."

He can't imagine Kakashi being willing to sit still for days around strangers in a dank cave, nevermind Akatsuki members. Obito himself is one thing but Konoha had seen Akatsuki as a threat and as ANBU who used to be ordered to monitor them, Kakashi surely still has that perspective. It's better to not exacerbate anything yet until he can find out Kakashi's reaction to beasts hunting.

Unlike Iwa and other smaller big villages who happily purchased Akatsuki's service in secret, Konoha never had the need to; what with the large number of prestigious clans residing among their ranks. It's one of the Big 5 Villages actively shielding itself from Akatsuki's influence.

And that's alright, he needs Kakashi to be as detached from Akatsuki as humanly possible anyway.

Thinking over what happened in the past hours too, he'd also gotten to gauge Sasuke's progress. It won't be much longer until he clashes with Itachi. And that'll be another Akatsuki member gone. Itachi would sooner eat his own eyes than kill Sasuke.

Surprisingly they've also already lost the Zombie Combi earlier to Konoha's retaliation for Asuma.

In response to their growing activity in the limelight, the Godaime Hokage, Tsunade, has created Twenty Platoons of 4 shinobis squad to track down Akatsuki. He'll have to watch out for this generation's Ino-Shika-Cho trio. Mind-Switch combined with Shadow Jutsu can be such a pain. They dealt with Hidan while Mokuton's team managed to kill Kakuzu thanks also to the Kyuubi jinchuuriki, Uzumaki Naruto.

With Kakuzu gone, the funding of their organization had been stalling. Well that's Pein's and Konan's problem now, because Obito's plan only requires the tailed-beasts.

The beasts left to be sealed are the 5 to 9-tails.

Zetsu has figured out the identity of the 5-tails and Kakashi had unwittingly helped him years ago with the Kyuubi. So Akatsuki still has to find out the identity of the 6 to 8-tails' jinchuurikis first before they can drop the espionage game and begin the hunting game.

At this point, villages who've lost their first jinchuurikis like Kiri, Kumo and Iwa are catching onto Akatsuki's goal while others like Konoha are only just beginning to notice the threat. The Twenty Platoons are proof of that.

And that's why he needs to set the loose cannon Sasuke on them to divert their attention to the vengeful little Uchiha instead. After he got his revenge on his brother, of course.

Still, although there's only half left, what remains are the much stronger beasts than the ones Akatsuki had sealed so far. They might have been able to take it relatively easy with 1 to 4-tails, but the others are honest-to-Kami monsters. Obito needs to start working on Kakashi's rehabilitation soon.

The lab is blessedly intact and free of blood and his patient is miraculously still sitting where Obito left him (not that he doubts Kakashi would prioritize curiosity over his immediate health but it's still a probability), except now there's that painfully orange book in his hand.

"You're back early" Kakashi greeted without looking up from whichever chapter he's currently at.

He suspects the Hatake would've bled all over his lab had Obito not provided a distraction material. Shinobi's mind being sharp as they are, the constant need to move is something Obito is familiar with.

It's good that Kakashi had an obvious bone Obito could throw at him, but he still remembers the furious blush on his face when the cashier took a half-second longer at the title he's purchasing. Obito used a transformation jutsu, obviously, but it was still himself who went and bought it.

Damn the Hatake's plummeting reading taste. He went from the genius who traded fuuinjutsu scrolls with the Fourth Hokage to reading Jiraiya's questionable porn fantasy.

"It was finished early."

Obito takes off his mask and robe. It had been a long day and he could have come back the next morning, but why wait? It's not like which time of the day is an important concept to both of them right now.

He noticed the IV drip does need replacement.

While Obito busies himself with the task, Kakashi closes Ichcha-Icha and studies his friend with one eye. He spent most of his life closing the sharingan; whether the chakra drain no longer matters or not, old habits die hard.

"Did you get rained on?"

"Huh?"

"Your hair is still wet, baka."

Obito's pretty sure his hair is only half-wet now. At least not dripping water anymore. Used to seeing Kakashi being incapacitated for the past months, he had semi-forgotten how observant Kakashi is.

“I came back as soon as i can because i’m worried about you, and this is what i get,” Obito pouted as he disconnected the morphine tube. Kakashi doesn’t need it anymore.

Kakashi is unamused. “I’ll live. Dry it properly first, do you want to get sick?”

There's Hatake's special brand of cold affection.

“I won’t get sick from rain, I have fire affinity.”

It feels good to mindlessly argue about trivial things again. Plotting is mentally tiring.

“-and I’m not the one with a needle stuck inside their body, Bakashi. How do you feel?” almost-empty IV bags in hand, he looks downward to assess the patient.

Said patient cocked his head and batted his eyelashes at Obito in an exaggerated manner.

“Lonely.”

It’s good the IV bags in his hand remind him that Kakashi is still wounded, otherwise Obito would throttle the little shit.

Seeing Obito’s right eye unconsciously flashes red due to internal thoughts, Kakashi hurriedly adds, “-but *physically*, better. I don’t feel so tired sitting up for a long period, and a light stretch doesn’t feel like it’d rip my stomach open anymore. ”

Of course this idiot would try to test the limit of his body immediately. But he’s still here, and not spilling guts all over the floor. He’d count it a victory.

“Good. We can start with your rehabilitation then,”

- - -

Kakashi regained consciousness in the 8th month; then it took the rest of the year to regain his dexterity and get back to fighting shape.

The torso is a very delicate position to injure yourself in because it’s

the center of movement that also contains the important inside bits. Obito was more careful with Kakashi's rehabilitation than he suspects Madara was with his.

It won't do to keep leaving the injured man in an isolated space, so Obito took Kakashi to a small inn somewhere remote in Kumogakure ("Maybe all these thunders will help you heal faster, Hatake") where he then placed a genjutsu on the entire staff before putting Kakashi to recuperate in one of the room.

And by 'entire', Obito literally put the *entire* operating staff in one.

"...Obito I know you're good at genjutsu but do you not think the entire inn is a little excessive? I mean the gardener doesn't"

"Shut up and get inside, Hatake."

The inn is busy enough that there would always be some guests coming and going, so there won't be a suspicion about a perpetually rented room. Kakashi won't be able to go to villages or even out of the room, but he'll be taken care of by the staff until he's strong enough to move.

Obito paid the inn for their accommodation. The genjutsu was for them to not see Kakashi as *Kakashi*.

Still, placing the gardener in one is a little over the top for Kakashi; It's not like he's going to talk to or be seen by the man. Even the window in his room immediately opens to the sea, not the back garden. But Obito is meticulous. And also ridiculous.

Though it only takes one single conflicting testimony to get an entire lie to unravel, so Kakashi at least can understand his friend's reasoning.

Remembering the customized Akatsuki robe, after he's settled for a few days Kakashi had broached the topic regarding disguising his identity to Obito.

"I can bleach my hair and change the style so it doesn't stand out too much, like Sukea?" he offered while they were eating breakfast one morning, accompanied by yet another thunderstorm so prevalent in the Land.

During his stay at the inn, it's bothersome and risking unwanted attention to keep wearing shinobi garments. So Kakashi had taken to

wearing a yukata, pale grey in color with a rich green obi; While Obito sticks to his black shirt if he was just visiting, but changes into a purple one with dark obi when he stays overnight.

This morning is one such when Obito wears the looser outfit.

At Kakashi's suggestion Obito put down his chopstick and looked at the white-haired man with sharingan immediately active.

"Don't you **ever** dare do that, Bakashi," the Uchiha had all but growled.

Kakashi blinked twice, taken aback at Obito's sudden intensity and nodded without words.

He doesn't really have a particular preference over his own appearance if the mission requires it, but it seems Obito does.

Thinking about all those times in Konoha Obito plays with his hair though.

Ah.

A man's fetish.

The subject immediately settled, Kakashi continued eating his broiled-saury while looking at the stormy sky outside.

Bordering with the sea, Kumo sure have tasty seafood.

- - -

After weeks of light exercise, once Kakashi (and Obito) is certain he won't have to worry about his intestine spilling out if he did a stretch wrong, Obito warps both of them to have a mock spar in Kamui.

At first they went easy, but as Kakashi's physique improved, what started as a light spar gradually became an actual fight with simple ninjutsus thrown in.

Without Kamui on his table, Obito finds Kakashi still the superior taijutsu user as they trade punches and slashes. It makes sense as Kakashi is/was an active ANBU operative who uses mainly taijutsu

and kenjutsu in covert missions.

Though boosted by the Hashirama cells, Kakashi's chakra reserve is still less than Obito's, but that's not an issue as Kakashi had always made up in technique and precision what he lacked in brute force.

All in all, they're still more or less an equal fighter where a serious fight between them can easily end in either Obito or Kakashi's favor.

Kakashi also tested his Mangekyou, and found that yes, his vision did not deteriorate if he didn't overdo it, and even once it does, it recovered to normal soon after thanks to the cells. Furthermore the size of the object, distance to said object, and the amount of times he can use Kamui is much more than before.

Today, after another serious match in Kamui that ended with Kakashi's kunai hovering on Obito's throat, actually drawing his friend's blood, they warped back to the inn and clean themselves up.

During sparring they didn't shy from actually wounding each other with weapons. Although stabbing vital organs is obviously out of the question (not because it'd kill them, but because it'd take more time to heal), grazing or slicing are well within the capability of instant regeneration. Obito already knows the healing limits of his body, and so they need to find out Kakashi's. While Obito can regrow the hashirama limbs easily should he lose it, Kakashi obviously cannot. He'll have to readjust and rehabilitate again just like Obito did when he lost his real right arm.

In the bath, Kakashi can't help but poke at the synthetic skin snaking around his stomach, the place he had set his seal on.

For such an impressive injury it left a mere sliver of wound; but he suspected most of his inside is now white matter.

He knew his body would immediately activate the Body Disintegration Jutsu once the brain activity ceases, destroying Obito's gifted sharingan in the process; so it didn't really matter where he placed the explosion so long it killed him before Konoha could react.

The neck would've been the obvious choice, but it seemed impolite to nonconsensually traumatize his audience with such distasteful display. And he didn't know whether he'd had to do it in front of the aging Sandaime or not. Plus he can't put too large an explosion, or it'd risk injuring anyone who might be near; so what was needed was area over intensity. Had he put the seal on his chest, with the lacking

strength of the explosion it's likely to shatter his ribcage instead of his heart and that would really suck because not only he'll fail to die, he'll be in a stupid amount of pain, and then they'll remove any possibility of him self-terminating in the future.

So across the stomach was where he set the choice on.

That it bore an uncanny resemblance to how his father killed himself, just with a different weapon, was coincidental. It only registered when he was about to activate the seal and that's when it crossed his mind '*'Oh wait...this is just like...'* But by then he no longer has time nor capability to think about it and afterwards, much of anything else really.

Kakashi looks down at the stretch of artificial white cutting him in half. It really looks just like a knife wound.

Like being slashed open by the White Chakra Sabre.

Morbidly, he also marvels at how Obito had seen the outside and literal inside of his body more than anyone else or even himself and decides that's enough crazy thoughts for today.

He stayed soaking in the water for a while, feeling the exhaustion from the spar bleeding out with a contented sigh. Then he finishes his bath, dresses himself and steps out.

Obito had dimmed the light in their room, most now coming from the moonlight outside. The man himself already changed into his purple yukata and is now sitting by the writing-alcove by the window; between his fingers is a small, red sake cup.

It's winter and the snow has started to fall. In Kumo, cloudy skies are so common that the moon itself is rarely visible; but it seems this is one of those rare nights when they can enjoy the pale celestial sight.

"I think we can count myself as fully recovered now," Kakashi declares as-matter-of-factly as he makes his way to the sake tray near Obito.

Coming out from the bath, he hasn't bothered to put on his cloth mask.

Obito snorted, sparing him a glance from a single black eye. It lingers for a second on Kakashi's mouth, before coming back up to look him in the eyes.

“After almost slitting my throat? Yes, I'd say you are, Hatake.”

The inn keeps a steady inner temperature, so despite wearing only a yukata Kakashi doesn't feel too cold. Sitting in front of his friend who had turned his gaze back to outside, Kakashi pours himself a cup.

From experience he knows Obito won't feel anything more than a slight buzz, yet there's already less than half of sake left. The alcoholic.

It warms his inside, and this proximity with a fire-affinity Uchiha acts a little like a mini heater. It is a little much in summer though.

Enjoying the seasons and alcohol are all well and good, but there are some matters he needs to discuss with Obito now that he's able to move again.

“Does this mean my little vacation can be over?” In the quiet of the room, Hound asks.

Obito slowly turns and regards the ANBU with a long look, head at rest on one palm.

His friend keeps silent and if they're going to play the stubborn game of which-side-breaks-first, Hound is confident he's going to win. Once, he stayed kneeled for about half an hour in a quiet office save for scratching of pen as Sandaime did his paperwork, until the old Hokage acquiesced with a tired exhale and gave him the get-go for a solo recon mission. To Kiri.

In lieu of answering, Obito's hand moves toward the ANBU's front yukata, feeling the body beneath hitches when cold fingers meet warm skin.

“You're a workaholic, Hatake, do you know that?”

That's kind of hypocritical coming from the man who replaces sleep with work, Obito. But Hound doesn't voice this. He has a feeling him overworking isn't what Obito was concerned about.

“Do you want to help me?” The inquiry is deceptively soft.

Hound obediently leans to the touch, and nods.

“Yes.”

Quick as a whip, the hand that was gently brushing over his

collarbone snatches the yukata fabric and half-forcefully pulls Hound closer so that they're face to face with the younger man half-straddling Obito.

He doesn't fight Obito's sudden hostility as his friend sneers, though the derision feels directed inwards.

"Even though you don't know what I intend to do?" Charcoal black-eye has long since set ablaze.

Sure, Hound didn't know yet *exactly* what he was signing up for, but he placed his trust and life to Uchiha Obito. His friend, his *hero*. And if it's about difficulty, not knowing is never a problem for a hailed genius. There's nothing too complicated for him to understand or know once he sets his mind to it.

The problem is not with his capabilities, it's with Obito's resolution.

He puts a hand on Obito's tense shoulder to balance himself. A yukata isn't perfect for such action, but Hound always makes do and settles on one knee. "You told me... you're going to create a peaceful world," he tests carefully.

Sharingan glow as Obito considers something in Hound, whose face is expressionless under the scrutiny.

"Yes," Obito acquiesces. "I am."

Like the energy had left him at this, the fingers eased from clawing into the grey yukata, but a gentle hand placed on top of his still-curled fist stopped him, making Obito frown.

"If that's the future you want to see, then," Hound flick a calm, resolved gaze toward his conflicted friend.

"Let me be of use."

The declaration hung thickly in the air between them.

Obito's mouth twists in a wry smile and he moves away from the wall to gently push the younger man onto the tatami mat.

Suddenly laying on the floor, Kakashi looks up in bewilderment at the

sudden switch. The front of his yukata is already half-open haphazardly from Obito's rough treatment.

Kakashi opened his mouth to say something, but Obito swiftly moved forward to kiss his partner, receiving a reluctant, but soon approving hum that turns into a semi-outraged “..-mnhgguh??” when Obito breaks away before Kakashi can deepen their kiss.

Hatake didn't wear his mask when he came out of the bathroom, something Obito immediately took note of with some amount of suspicion. *Hound* was up to something and he was right.

However many times he'd seen Kakashi's lower face, Obito never gets used to it because first the man kept his mask up at any other time to the point that if it was just a quick sex, Kakashi won't even bother to remove his mask. Second, Kakashi's just...gorgeously eye-catching. Alright he'll admit that. Even if Kakashi one-impossible-day decided to stop wearing his mask, Obito thinks he won't ever tire of looking at his unfairly attractive friend.

But that's Kakashi.

Hound though, doesn't seem to have a problem with baring his unmuzzled fangs once his mind is set on a target. He had done so in the hot spring resort as Sukea, and right now Obito guessed *he* is *Hound*'s objective tonight.

Well two can play the game, Hatake.

He works down Kakashi's lean body, leaving a trail of bite marks in his wake while one hand attempts to untie the green obi. Arriving on Kakashi's stomach, he licks at the seams of the healed wound, where the edge of Hashirama cells meets his skin, feeling muscle twitches in response. Obito knows the synthetic skin doesn't have as much sensitivity; He imagines it's a strange new sensation for Kakashi.

They hadn't really touched each other since Kakashi almost died. The most was back in the lab when Obito hugged him. Once Kakashi recovered enough to not need the IV, Obito immediately took him to the inn and together they planned out Kakashi's rehabilitation method. Between Obito's own work away, and Kakashi's body still recovering, there was just no right moment or mood to indulge in any

form of physical pleasure.

Obito was almost successful in undressing Kakashi when a hand tugs his hair impatiently up. Having experienced being denied once, Kakashi moves his tongue efficiently, giving little whines to be let in until the elder obliges. This time Kakashi holds the spiky black locks in a tight grip so Obito can't tease him again.

His attention is demanded elsewhere but Obito's hands can multitask just fine. Misusing Kamui as always, he poured a generous amount of lube over their hardened cocks and starts stroking lazily. He grinds against Kakashi for a while, the younger man spreading his legs, clamping it on either Obito's sides.

They've done this enough back in Konoha too that Obito knows Kakashi only gets vocal once he's pushed over the edge. The grip on hair is now little painful and when Obito finally breaks their kiss, a trail of saliva is left connecting their tongue.

Obito sped up the movement of his hand pumping both of their cocks, and the strength of his hips grinding Kakashi's, panting.

Mismatched eyes shot open and pale fingers claws at Obito's chest still half covered by the purple yukata, while Kakashi is practically undressed, his only held together by the green obi on his waist. The grey yukata bunches around his elbows and under his back, still loosely tied with the obi around his stomach since Obito hasn't been able to completely untie the damn thing what with his severely reduced processing power and Kakashi keeps hogging his attention away.

Sharingan has no problem working under limited light, and Obito can make out the discreet red tattoo of Konoha black-ops on left shoulder concealed by the darkness of the room.

Kakashi had always been a pale kid, but the unnatural white of the synthetic skin still stands out. He traces the scar, reminded of what Kakashi had done at the mere threat to Obito's identity.

The white-haired man closes his eyes and shudder at the ministration, letting out a definitely petulant whine that reminds Obito how bratty his ANBU can be; One of the legs around Obito's hips smacks his back not-so-gently in reproach.

“Obito...get on with it.”

Oh right.

Kakashi's reddened cock, quivering with needs and already leaking drops of precum onto the yukata. Although he's still hard, Obito's mind has calmed down somewhat but clearly Kakashi is high-strung with the need to be brought to the finish. So without any more delay Obito uncaps the lube, pours an amount to his fingers, and carefully nudges Kakashi's opening.

And found it already loose and relaxed.

His brain snapped and the clear thread he had just grasped is broken again.

"You little-!"

This brat had prepped himself in the bath.

Kakashi grinned, clearly expecting Obito's outburst. He lets out a breathy laughter, eyes twinkling in mischief. "What? It's been a while, I've been wanting to."

With one nimble feet, he forces Obito to half-bend forward, "Come onn..fuck me, " Kakashi keened low and needy.

Obito huffed. He doesn't waste any more time in pouring lube on himself, and presses the blunt head of his cock in.

Kakashi throws his head back when he feels Obito enters him with one swift movement, and without any warning starts pounding hard.

The younger reached up with both hands, and Obito, sensing what his partner wanted, shifted more of his weight to his toes and leaned over so Kakashi can put his arms around Obito's neck and pull their bodies flush. In a particularly well-aimed thrust that makes Kakashi choked out his name, Obito immediately felt the sting along his trapezius.

Hound...likes to use his claws.

Having been worked up by their previous foreplay, it's not long before Obito felt himself close to the edge, with Kakashi already almost arriving at his first. After a few more deep thrusts, Kakashi came first with a sob, shooting out against their stomach and soon brought Obito to his own end. Groaning, he spilled deep inside Kakashi with a few aborted movement.

Kakashi grunted an ‘Oof.’ when Obito tumbles down on top of him in an exhausted daze.

“‘bito.”

Once their breathing settles down Obito hears his name being whispered.

Putting his weight on one hand, he lifted himself up and was confronted with a Kakashi who looked at him knowingly.

“I want to help you.”

Kakashi’s voice is still hoarse from their act, but his mismatched eyes are determined.

....figures that something like sex won’t distract a bloodhound.

Obito places his right hand around Kakashi’s throat, at that most fragile location of the human body. His thumb is resting lightly on the carotid artery. Obito knows Kakashi is aware of what he can do. Hound has personally witnessed what Tobi did to a human neck with bare hands. Yet the ANBU under his touch, his friend, his partner, does not tense even once at the danger, merely looks up with tired, curious half-lidded gaze.

Ah, he knows when he already lost. At some point during Kakashi’s continued presence in his life, Obito was defeated.

He sees the ‘collar’ he placed all those years ago through a binding vow to chain the ANBU to him.

Obito feel a little smile forming.

Kakashi never needed that in the first place, did he?

Obito closes his eyes and in his mind, he clasps open the unnecessary restraint and throws it aside.

Leaning his forehead against Kakashi’s, Obito whispers, heart oddly light. “Alright.”

Kakashi heard his friend repeat quietly as if to himself, like a surrender.

“Alright.”

Chapter End Notes

- >The right way to Kakashi's heart is through Icha icha.
- > Also yeah that was totally that obkk fight in Kamui.

P.S

Also some might notice the name theming is similar to (buddhist) Sutta Pitaka/discourses. Yaa!!

Liberation corresponds to Fire Sermon-Sutta that spoke about the liberation from (the flames of) suffering
Mass Suffering (actually supposed to be Mass of Suffering, but hey obkk was talking about saving the entire world.) is to Mahadukkha-Sutta that gives understanding on the varied causes of suffering.

(Suture) Discourse on Mass Suffering 2

Chapter Summary

There's a prickling sensation behind him that makes his hair stand up on ends and Obito jolts upright.

Someone's back against his. A child's.

It's here again.

Even without looking, Obito knows *Hatake Kakashi* is sitting behind him.

Why are you doubting yourself now of all times, dead last?

Chapter Notes

> Regarding the Obito's Cursed Seal from Madara.

Canon only explicitly said it was so that he can't kill himself and can't become a jinchuuriki. I'm aware it's popular in obkk for it to be more of a control seal.

But in this fic, i follow strictly what canon said. The cursed seal was ONLY to prevent him from taking in the 10-tails and prevent him from killing himself. Although Madara did kill Rin to instigate Obito's fall, all the homicide afterwards was pure Obito. I prefer it that way.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Kakashi returned to the bathroom to clean himself again, leaving Obito with his thoughts and no more alcohol to distract him from it. Their futons are laid out, but despite feeling the rare heaviness in his limbs, thoughts are preventing sleep. So as compromise, Obito sits hunched with one knee drawn to rest his head on.

After their spar today, he knows Kakashi has regained his full fighting capability for some time now. For the past few days he has been distracted and Kakashi tactfully gives Obito time while he pretends to train his already-healed body. That Hound finally brought it up today

means the ANBU is done waiting.

Obito knows why he hesitated. He doesn't want...Kakashi to *leave*, is the thing. And he's figuring out the best way to proceed.

Make no mistake, he *had* plans. The problem is it's Obito himself who somehow changed.

His original purpose for Kakashi doesn't require Obito to tell him everything. If need be he can lie easily as breathing, and even if Kakashi notices the deceit Obito planned to exploit his guilt to rein him in; or *who's he kidding*, Hatake himself already does a good job on that front.

But after being with Kakashi...

His friend had proven sharp as ever despite being severely compromised when it comes to Obito. Yet, even with the conclusion Hatake would've no doubt arrived in regards to Obito's moral character, he still stayed, didn't betray Obito when it came to it, and even expressed strong desire to give further assistance. Obito can tell it's not even about his promise, Kakashi himself does want to help.

And Obito can't *-doesn't* want to deceive his friend. Not in this.

So he'll have to show everything to Kakashi, including what he did to Konoha, to their sensei and Kushina and let Kakashi decide on his own what he wants to do next. And that's what makes him anxious.

In the first place, after him and Rin, the reason Kakashi was in such a depressive state was Minato and Kushina's death. That's when the world completed in breaking him, and Obito plays a major part in that. Recently, he has had his own backtracking regarding that night. He could even admit to feeling remorse at having done it the way he did. But even if he has second thoughts about it now, that doesn't change the result. Guilt won't bring back the dead.

And now he becomes afraid of what his friend would do if he showed the truth, and the source of this fear was the desire to achieve Infinite Tsukuyomi *alongside* Kakashi.

Obito went from simply wanting a piece he can use to wanting his last teammate to stand by him together to remake this hell.

And isn't it a nauseating thing, for *him* to wish for that? Him who had torn apart others for the sake of his plan, to want the friend whom he

had also hurt many times, to understand him.

There's a prickling sensation behind him that makes his hair stand up on ends and Obito jolts upright.

Someone's back against his. A child's.

It's here again.

Even without looking, Obito knows *Hatake Kakashi* is sitting behind him.

Obito doesn't remember exactly when it started.

At first, there was only Rin.

Not exactly her, but her memory. And that kept him forward in the worst of times, when not even Zetsu's wary reminder of the plan could calm him down, when all Obito wanted to do was to drown in his hatred, to lose his control and kill everyone in his immediate vicinity. Whenever that threatens to happen, as it often does in those early times, it's the image of her death his sharingan won't ever let him forget that grounds him. It cools his temper into smouldering coal, making him focused.

But sometime after his unplanned reunion with Kakashi, and them settling into some sort of interaction that started out lukewarm but had grown intimate in no time, Obito found himself re-evaluating the other half of his teammates who metaphorically also died that night with Rin.

The difference this time is he can no longer feel apathy afforded by the physical distance back when he was only watching Kakashi from afar.

Not when the younger man sometimes tensed in his sleep while Obito read beside him; then Kakashi would wake up and uncaring of who was in bed with him, silently pad his way to the kitchen to wash his hands over and over again until some neurons in the Hatake's brain takes pity on him and let him know that the blood is finally washed away and he can return to sleep now.

Not when Obito is so fucking close to Kakashi he's practically inside him, and Kakashi's skin is sweaty against his own and his mouth is gasping Obito's name, letting Obito use his body for his (theirs) pleasure.

Then afterwards what Kakashi did in Konoha to protect Obito, and now they're practically together for most of Obito's free time.

Nevermind him, how can anyone stay apathetic this close to someone you already had history with? Kakashi was his friend once. Obito might be a criminal now, but he's not a psychopath.

In short, against all odds and despite his original intention and (misdirected) anger toward Kakashi, they rekindled their earlier friendship that stalled when that boulder fell; And now having truly become friends in ways their younger selves didn't get the chance to be, Obito also began considering Kakashi's pain on top of his.

Obito had always been too protective toward those he considered his precious people. Perhaps that is his flaw. He cares, he *can't help* but care. Even if he tries his damndest to remain detached, in the end he came to care. Of all the Uchiha traits the black sheep didn't inherit, Obito did inherit their tendency to love (too) deeply.

And after that, Obito starts to become haunted not only with Rin's image in his sharingan, but also *Kakashi*.

Is it because one is dead and the other is still alive that the teammate who 'appears' outside his eye is only ever *Kakashi*? Obito isn't familiar with the connection of mental health with sharingan enough to know. Or mental health for that matter.

He never told Kakashi of his own bouts of psychosis and doesn't intend to. His friend isn't exactly the paragon of mental health either, and it will only bring more questions between them than help. And he won't even pretend to not understand why *Kakashi* started appearing once Obito started regarding the alive one as not merely a pawn to be used.

Though whenever *he* appears, *Kakashi* never faces him, so all Obito ever sees is his back. Small; so young and already burdened with deaths that shouldn't be on him. Or on any children, shinobis or not. And it twisted Obito's heart to see the other friend he'd lost long ago.

Because *it's* aware of Obito's inner thoughts, *child Kakashi* clicked his tongue in impatience.

While memory-Rin never addresses Obito directly, *hallucination-Kakashi* is far more active.

Why are you doubting yourself now of all times, dead last?

Cold, cutting voice like Obito remembers the way it stays after his father's suicide, when he turned himself over completely to shinobi rule book.

Even the room temperature drops sharply in ways that have nothing to do with the snow outside. Obito feel the chill all the way into his bone marrow.

Hesitating? After what you've done to come this far?

The imitation of his childhood teammate hissed in mockery and his own hallucination or not, Obito is never one to accept an insult lying down from any Hatake.

Shut up Bakashi. I was just-

He snapped his excuse shut when he feel the body behind him stands up. And suddenly there's that dreadful tap-tapping noise of heavy liquid falling on the tatami mat to Obito's left side and he stays frozen in his spot, not daring to even glance because he knows what it is-

Then, are you going to let it happen again? Are you going to let children like Rin, who shouldn't have to, sacrifice their lives for the good of others.

Obito stops breathing.

Kakashi is now standing behind him, back still to Obito.

And he knows if he turns around he won't be able to see *Kakashi's* face, but he knows his friend would have a vertical scar on his left eye, and he knows that left eye would be as red as Rin's life sluggishly flowing down from his hand, dripping onto the floor. And if he strains his ears, among the pitter-pattering of blood he could hear the low chirping of birds that sang their terrible, lethal song that night and even feel the threatening sizzling of lightning so close to his left shoulder.

And someone like me, who could've been more...A hero, did you say?

Obito swallows the lump in his throat, forcing his feeling down because his chakra is starting to rears up and it will alarm the actual *Kakashi*. And he has to restrain himself from tearing the tatami mat because that will raise concerns. Plus he really doesn't want to be found crying when *Kakashi* returns to the room.

Now the only thing I can do is apologizing to gravestones.

Child Kakashi is never emotional in Obito's head. He just states everything in a matter-of-fact way. No matter how horrific, no matter how painful the reality was.

Maybe it's precisely that absence of emotion in his voice that pained Obito so much. Because even though he's aware this is just a projection his own brain made up, *that* trait wasn't Obito's overarching imagination. That was truly how *Kakashi* was like back then, after what Konoha did to their own White Fang.

And that's what makes him grit his teeth in fury and desperation, his sharingan burns wetly inside his eye socket with the spiteful rejection at this worthless hell that took the life of both his dear comrades away so fast, and so absurdly senseless.

Rin, literally. Kakashi, figuratively.

Kakashi, who has neither mercy nor patience for Obito's spiraling emotions, cuts his thoughts with a scathing assertion.

Use me, baka Obito. Isn't this why you decided to drag me along?

"Let me be of use."

Obito shudders and shakes his head.

His feelings aside, Obito knows Kakashi also loved Rin. Perhaps not tinged with romantic affection like Obito's love, but also not less than. His pain in Rin's death was not just about his failed promise to Obito, he knows Kakashi would've protected Rin regardless.

No. Kakashi himself loved Rin deep enough that her death awakened his own Mangekyou despite not being an Uchiha.

And to Obito, *to an Uchiha*, is that not the ultimate proof of Kakashi's love and suffering?

Though their earlier interactions was mostly nothing but him and Kakashi fighting and Rin patiently dealing with them because shinobis or not they're still kids who were being sent into a war they had no business being in.

(And was it not the hidden village's system in the first place that allowed kids to graduate as "grown-up" shinobi on papers to justify them being sent to war as 'You read the fine print. You signed up for this'. No, they didn't sign up for war. They signed up to protect their village and their loved ones. Not die in some meaningless conflict that started from stupidity or selfishness of someone higher-up)

But all three of them had come to love each other so deeply and this world made them suffer for that.

Obito had already made his decision when he gave Kakashi his answer earlier.

But you're my friend too Kakashi. Rin. Both of you.

I want to do this with you both, for us. And for all of those children who never should die in the name of their villages and those would-be heroes who should've become something much more.

No more lies with Kakashi.

If they're going to do this together, then he wants Kakashi to be with him on the same page. Otherwise... it might be better for them to separate even if his friend becomes his enemy once Obito reveals the truth.

His hallucination is quiet at his reply.

Other than memories of her, he never actually felt or heard Rin; but he believes she's watching over him - them, now that the actual Kakashi is staying with him. and so he had taken the habit of including her too whenever this *Kakashi* appears.

Obito inhales sharply when he feels a cold, wet hand on his shoulder.

It seeps into the thin layer of the yukata until he can feel it on his skin.

And now he had to bite his lip hard to not cry, to not scream, because he knows this is in his own head but *Kakashi*'s small hand feels solid on his shoulder, and *Rin*'s blood is wet on his skin and all Obito wants is to turn and hug them both and go home to wherever they are; Konoha, Minato and Kushina's home he destroyed with the Kyuubi, hell he'd go to the dilapidated ruins of Uchiha Compound where even in death his clansmen would still pretend he didn't exist if only Rin and Kakashi were there.

Because that's what home means to an unwanted orphan like Uchiha Obito.

The friends and the bonds he cherishes, not an empty, meaningless place.

When he comes outside the shower Obito is curled on the messy futon, asleep, though it looked as if his friend didn't mean to. He didn't change his clothes nor use a blanket. The window is still wide open, letting in winter chill and although Kakashi knows Uchiha runs hot but *still*.

Yet when he was about to wake the hopeless man up, he stopped short at Obito's expression.

Back in Konoha, Kakashi knows Obito rarely sleeps. After the cave, thanks to the sheer amount of Hashirama's Cells in him, Obito no longer requires sustenance or sleep. So whenever he stays the night, he'd wait until Kakashi seemingly falls asleep and then goes to read or think.

Maybe the work he finished before visiting, the sparring sessions, and the sex that followed finally depleted Obito's energy enough that his friend is now breathing steadily in a rare sleep. But Obito's face looks pained, like he was crying or about to. Kakashi never sees Obito having a nightmare, so he doesn't know what sign to look for. Other than that, Obito doesn't make a sound aside from his breathing.

He wanted to drape a blanket, but he knows it's unwise to do that to a sleeping shinobi, and since he doesn't want to wake Obito up all he can do is to silently close the window and move as close as he can without touching his friend, hoping the proximity of their bodies would act like a heater.

As tired as he is now it's Kakashi's turn to be unable to sleep. Looking at Obito's form, so familiar and foreign at the same time.

Kakashi isn't naive. He knows Obito is not simply the adult form of the odd sunshine Uchiha kid from before. Maybe some things didn't change, and sometimes this Obito can prove himself to be the numbskull he was and still is. But..there's blood on Obito's hands now and not all of it deserved.

As half-mad from guilt as Kakashi was when they met, he knew the Obito who somehow came back from that cave holds a darkness in him. Even without remembering Tobi's taunting, Kakashi had theorized that Obito's Mangekyou must've been from him seeing Rin's death, seeing *Kakashi killed her*. And if that's the reason Obito didn't return to the village even when he turns out to be alive, then...

Kakashi is not so completely blinded by his devotion. It's just that...he accepts it. He accepts that Obito has changed. It did not alter the fact that Obito gave his eye to Kakashi and saved his life.

And it's not like Kakashi follows Obito just to "return life debt" as he initially said. He has his own selfish reason too, namely, he couldn't do it anymore. He can't continue living as the sole surviving member of Team Minato.

He can't wake up to Rin choking on her blood saying his name in her last aborted whisper, he can't talk to his friends without being reminded of the dearest ones he had lost, he can't pretend to enjoy the pretty flowers and changing seasons during days while the night he spend it elbow deep in someone else's viscera because if he somehow doesn't keep contributing something, anything to help maintain the peace his team had sacrificed their life for, the guilt and shame of being a useless failure would eat him alive from the inside out and Obito's gift or not he might as well stab an actual blade into his own belly then.

Obito had said many times about how worthless this world is, and how it was hell. And Kakashi has to agree with him. He can only see the darkness the world has plunged himself into and it was only the miraculous reunion with his friend that gave some light to his world. So Kakashi isn't entirely without his own selfish reason in choosing Obito.

The next morning after breakfast, Kakashi stayed in the room while Obito went to notify the inn of the end of their stay. He was going to wear his uniform, assuming they'll be getting straight to work. But Obito stopped him and said that there's something he needs to show Kakashi first. So here he is sitting against the wall for Obito to come back.

Obito enters the room after a few minutes. They've both switched out from the yukata to their shinobi garbs. Kakashi is wearing the black sleeveless shirt of ANBU uniforms just without the armour while Obito is in the black shirt he usually wore under the Akatsuki robe.

"Let's go," Obito held his arm out to Kakashi, who easily stands up and took it.

In the familiar dimension, releasing Kakashi's hand, Obito takes a deep breath and steps back.

"Kakashi, there are a lot of things you need to know first if you want to help me. And after knowing, your own intent may change,"

Kakashi didn't respond and waited.

"-and I will understand that. I need you to know, I won't force you to follow or help me. Not out of the goodness of myself," Obito grinned, the humor not reaching his eye, "but simply a forced slavery is not efficient for what i would've needed you to do."

"You can walk away and simply live your life away from me. I won't pursue after you. But if you do walk away with the intention of stopping me, the next time we meet will be on the battlefield. I'm sure you understand what I mean." Sharingan makes explicit the unsaid threat.

Obito will respect Kakashi's decision, whatever it is. He won't do the cowardly move like killing Kakashi while still in the genjutsu, or trapping him in Kamui. If Kakashi walks away, just this once, Obito would let him. And he would live with that risk, someone having full knowledge of his story. He decided *that* will be his apology for destroying Kakashi's world. But, Obito won't hesitate to kill Kakashi when they meet again on the battlefield.

Kakashi immediately gets what Obito is hinting at. He was reluctant to let Kakashi help because there's something he wanted to hide. And there's his friend letting the exit wide open out of remorse

Reasonable enough, Kakashi nodded.

"There's too much to tell with words, luckily..." Obito's grin widened. Sitting down, 3-tomoes turns into a pinwheel, "What's a little genjutsu between us. What do you say, Kakashi?"

Rolling his eyes, Kakashi snorted. He sits down and looks straight at Obito's eye, nodding.

"Spin away, Obito."

Thus Obito took Kakashi to his world.

He showed what happened to him from the beginning, when they left him in that cave. Kakashi looked surprised at the visage of one aging Uchiha Madara, towering before flabbergasted Obito, and behind the legendary shinobi the husk of the 10-tails.

He showed everything that happened, until the point of him hearing from Zetsu about Kakashi and Rin and -at this Kakashi's eyes widened and he sucks in a sharp breath- Obito arriving just in time to see Kakashi's hand tearing through Rin's body.

Obito stopped the genjutsu, because seeing the scene from Obito's vision had his friend looking deathly pale. He staggers backwards a little and for a second looks close to vomiting the breakfast they just had this morning.

Kakashi heaved on his knees for a bit, and straightened back. Once he gave Obito a shaky nod, Obito resumed his recollection; him awakening his own Mangekyou at the same time as Kakashi and slaughtering the Kiri Hunters with Mokuton in blind rage. At this Kakashi didn't seem too surprised; he said nothing and merely looked on with a weary gaze.

Of course Kakashi'd known. He regained consciousness in a pool of blood cradled in Minato sensei's frantic arms. He didn't have to be a genius to put the pieces together. Someone had killed all those Kiri Hunters and it sure wasn't their teacher.

They watch as Obito, swore his revenge and went back to Madara's cave, hearing about the Plan, and seeing Black Zetsu came out of Madara as his "manifested will".

And how Obito, having perfected Kamui, now roams the entire shinobi world as he pleases. The creation of Tobi's persona, his scheme with the original Akatsuki in Ame helped by Danzo's action, and his manipulations of Kiri's Mizukage, the village ultimately responsible for Rin's death and Kakashi's trauma, and him watching Kakashi's self-imposed ritual by Rin's grave, all of this Kakashi watches in stoic silence.

Having shown Kakashi this far, Obito pauses. His tone careful, "Knowing this much, I'm sure you've pieced what came next, haven't you?"

Kakashi can't look at Obito. He felt his grief renewed, along with it, fury. He knew..he knew Obito had innocents' blood on his hands. He just didn't expect it was the river of blood spilled in the night of Konoha's most devastating disaster and resulted in Minato sensei's and Kushina's death. The last of Kakashi's Konoha had died along with them that night!

"The Kyuubi attack on Konoha...Minato-sensei's and Kushina's death...why...?"

And he hadn't even mentioned Obito's treatment of their teacher's infant son, whom he took right after Kushina birthed him because Kakashi might just plunge a kunai into his friend then.

Obito considers his response. At the time, he was still burning with hatred towards everything equally, be it Konoha or Kiri, or the rest of this trash of a shinobi world. There was no one he wanted particularly dead, nor alive. He just wanted to wreak chaos to ease the madness swirling inside him.

"The Kyuubi, yes. At that time I needed to test my genjutsu on a tailed-beast as Madara taught me. But in all honesty I mainly wanted to see if I could sever my ties with Konoha. To commit myself.

Minato and Kushina were...no. I did not specifically mean for either of their deaths." And he didn't, or at least he didn't think that far at the time. All he wanted mainly was to wreak chaos in Konoha to settle the anger in him, and test his genjutsu.

Kakashi snaps to look at Obito, his expression incredulous, "Jinchuuriki dies once their tail-beast is extracted! And you attacked Kushina with the intention of doing just that!"

In the face of Kakashi's anger, Obito calmly replied, "Kushina is an Uzumaki. She wouldn't have died just from the Kyuubi being extracted and as you saw, she didn't. She'd have survived had Minato immediately taken her to have a chakra transfusion."

"I didn't intend for Kyuubi to kill everyone in Konoha. Once I tested my control of it I planned to take it away to be sealed much later for the plan. But Minato..."

Duties to one's village who can't even protect its loyal adults, nevermind children. Just look at what Konoha did to White Fang, who protected his comrades at the cost of a mission.

He stares at Kakashi who's still trying to process everything in shock.

"These are what I've done, Kakashi. And these are what I'm willing to do to achieve the plan. Though I didn't planned for it to happen, my actions still lead to Minato and Kushina's death,"

Obito has no more lies nor empty placations to offer Kakashi. All he has is his truth that he's currently showing.

Although he didn't feel any remorse immediately after that day, over time he did come to regret his actions. Not for attacking Konoha and not for losing grasp on the Kyuubi when he had it either, but for causing Minato and Kushina's death.

He begrudged Minato for never being there as their teacher, but having seen and manipulated his own portion of war and politics, Obito came to understand more about the complexities of the situation. Still, it didn't mean he accepts such a thing should happen to them. But now he doesn't blame or hate Minato as much as he did back then.

Sometimes logic can ease emotional pain.

"This, is the result of worthless shinobi system that forced children and adults alike to have suicidal loyalties in the name of ungrateful villages. Me, you, Rin, Minato, Kushina. All of us died, or..." tilting his head at Kakashi's increasingly ashen expression, "-Might as well be dead, for a flawed system that can't even maintain peace without leaving a mountain of dead bodies hidden underneath."

"But as you clearly see, I also made a lot of mistakes along the way." Obito's lips twist into a rueful smile. Even he can see that now, "At the time I was still angry and grieving from Rin. **So** angry that I attacked Konoha and the consequence of that is..." Obito shakes his head.

"What I intended to do is to save the world from further pain. But I've caused a lot more tragedy and continue to do so in the process of achieving that. That isn't right. That's not what i..." he sighed.

Confession is hard for someone who's used to manipulate people to get his way. But this is his decision. Kakashi had shown him nothing but sincerity and now it's Obito's turn.

"I admit I made a lot of grave mistakes. Including you, you're also my mistake Kakashi."

The younger man flinch in surprise, like he had forgotten he's also part of Obito's story.

"I was a child with a child's idea of a promise. When I asked you to protect Rin, I was just imagining a normal life back in Konoha. I thought you two would watch each other's backs, and I could live on through your sharingan. Sure we know shinobis' life is risky, but i didn't think something of *that* magnitude could happen to you and Rin." Obito's voice unintentionally lowered into a whisper, honestly he was still in half-disbelief at how things turned out for the three of them. How did the war devastated their lives so much?

Obito sits down on the illusion of Konoha's outskirt, beside him the images of Kyuubi still raging mutely like a morbid movie of the village's past tragedy on repeat. He waves it away so Kakashi could focus on his word instead of what had already happened.

Obito looks evenly at his teammate, who's still standing like he doesn't know what to do in the literal face of Obito's horrifying truth.

"After seeing all this, If you still intend on helping me, then... I guess this is part of what I need you for. To make sure I don't repeat the same mistake again, Kakashi." Obito runs a hand through his hair in frustration, "I'm trying to change the world, that can't happen without dirtying my hands. Being ANBU you understand this fine line. But there was no need for *unnecessary cruelty*."

"I know you might not believe me after what you've just seen. But what I want now is **peace**. It's just that sometimes," he let out a mirthless laugh, "I can't help expressing my hatred for this world. Even if not all of them deserve it," His hand falls back helplessly.

After spending time with Kakashi, Obito began to see that perhaps he had gone overboard with his rage. He remembers again that his goal is to make the world a better place with the Infinite Tsukuyomi, not destroy it in the process of achieving that.

True, at first his main motivation was simply for himself to meet Rin again in rejection of this hell, but now... he realized he actually *came* to want to save the world.

Kakashi's presence had changed him as much as Obito's had him.

Obito is mulling over his own unintended character development when Kakashi's shaky voice firmly cuts through the silence of the genjutsu world, "And the other part?"

“Huh?”

Kakashi sits down in front of Obito, eyes sharpening.

“The other part you need me for. You wanted me to keep you on the right track for the plan. What’s the other part?”

Yes, the original reason he needed Kakashi for. Obito straightened himself.

“Black Zetsu. Uchiha Madara’s will.”

- - -

There’re many things Obito admires about Kakashi, before reluctantly, now freely.

He admires Kakashi’s sharp intellect for one, his lethality as shinobi, and right now, his ability to emotionally compartmentalize.

That last trait is something Obito just couldn’t have no matter how much he wished for it. Perhaps it was thanks to his Uchiha blood. They literally gain power through their emotions, after all. The clan’s infamous Curse of Hatred.

So Obito’s actions are either motivated or accompanied by his emotions, even at his most seemingly apathetic. That’s why he wrought so much unneeded destruction in the process of completing his plan because he was angry and he needed to lash out.

But Kakashi, his gift or curse, has the ability to store one emotional response separate from the others. He can perform what he perceived as his duty without being incapacitated by events. That’s why he can still work flawlessly as ANBU operative despite having psychological issues longer than an entire family’s grocery shopping list.

Obito knew his revelations almost broke Kakashi, and Obito’s own hold over him. And honestly he was fine with that, had Kakashi really wanted to leave. Somehow now it’s worse if he had to keep deceiving his friend even if they work together. He’d rather Kakashi be his enemy, then. Plain and simple.

And just with Kakashi's presence beside him the past years, his companionship, Obito had seen the error of his ways. Even if Kakashi leaves, Obito thinks he will remember this lesson and do better himself while progressing the plan forward.

But Kakashi, curse his gift, once he recovered from the shock, immediately stored all the emotional catastrophe away into one drawer that he can torture himself with later, and for now look at the hard facts to get to work.

Obito would have to monitor his masochistic friend's psychological health later, but right now Kakashi has decided he's willing to stay with Obito; and the hardest part done, they're finally getting into the main business.

"From my memory, you saw him materialize from Madara as his 'will', didn't you?" Obito confirms.

Kakashi nods, "He's the plant-looking Akatsuki member, right?"

Obito smiles. Of course Konoha had been gathering information on his organization and Hound is privy to their bingo book of Akatsuki members.

"Yes. He has 2 parts, the Black one you saw coming out of Madara and the White one. They can move together, or separately."

In the safety of Kamui and his own genjutsu world, where not even Zetsu could eavesdrop on their conversation, Obito still can't help keeping his voice low.

"They can move anywhere there's earth, or nature. They're the same as Mokuton, in a way. Since they're entirely composed of Hashirama's Cells. Black Zetsu was Madara's will, while the White Zetsu is all Hashirama's cell... I don't know *why* and *how* they're sentient."

Kakashi sits cross legged, hands crossed in front of himself as he works over the information.

Obito takes a deep breath to say something he never dared say out loud.

"I don't trust Madara, and Zetsu. Black Zetsu, most of all. Since he's that old man's will,"

Hearing that, Kakashi glances up to Obito slowly, his gaze razor-sharp.

“When Madara saved me in that cave, later I found out he did something. He placed a seal on my heart, preventing me from destroying it or from killing myself” Obito admitted. There was an attempt, there was a failure. They don’t need to talk about that particular detail, and Kakashi immediately understands.

See, infuriating as he is, Obito does appreciate his friend’s genius.

“He placed a Cursed Seal on you, so that you can’t become the 10-tails Jinchuuriki for the Infinite Tsukuyomi, meaning you’ll have to resurrect him.

And it stops you from killing yourself to prevent you from escaping were you somehow to abandon his plan,” Kakashi arrived at Obito’s conclusion faster than Obito himself did after noticing the foreign intrusion inside his body. *Bastard.*

Obito continues, “If he truly wanted Infinite Tsukuyomi, he wouldn’t need to place this seal on me. Black Zetsu would’ve been enough. Madara didn’t trust me, and so I don’t trust him. The plan requires resurrecting him, and I don’t intend to do that,” he spat out, “I believe in the Infinite Tsukuyomi itself, and I want to achieve it without resurrecting Madara. Unfortunately, Black Zetsu is sticking to me, probably making sure Madara’s plan and his resurrection is put to motion”

“So you want me to help you deal with Zetsu when it’s time?” Kakashi added like it just came to him, “Oh that’s why you made me keep Mangekyou a secret. From Black Zetsu. Madara.”

Right. Genius.

“Yeah. And Black Zetsu is a ‘will’. He’s not exactly a killable existence, unless Madara reabsorbs him back or something. But if need be,” 3 tomoe twists into a pinwheel, “He can be sealed.”

Kakashi nodded. Sealing, Fuuinjutsu, has always been his side-passion.

They lapse into a natural silence as Kakashi’s mind works to process the frankly ridiculous amount of information Obito just dropped on him. It’s not simply storing facts, but he has to piece it together with what he already knows so that it actually becomes useful knowledge.

Obito leans back on both hands, chest and brain feeling a little lighter now that he shared his most intimate plan with Kakashi.

After a while, he can't resist asking, "So what do you think about the plan itself, Kakashi, Infinite Tsukuyomi?"

The only ones who knew it so far are the ones who support or planned it. Like Madara, Zetsu, and Obito. It'll be interesting to have an outside opinion on this.

Kakashi mentally backtracks to the memory Obito showed him in the genjutsu world. Yes, that is certainly a peaceful world. What Obito wanted to do is essentially to bring the paradise of afterlife into the living. He'd practically kill the entire humans on earth with peaceful dreams.

But...Kakashi thinks back on the pain, the anguish, the utter lack of hope for this world.

The Third Shinobi War was some years ago, and in the meantime, there had been many incidents that almost exploded into a full-blown conflict had there been less diplomacy on participating sides.

There's the Hyuuga affair between Konoha and Kumo, the Yosuga Pass tragedy between Kiri and Iwa , Ame's civil war... not to mention smaller villages' conflict that can escalate quickly.

Kakashi doesn't know if it'd be better if everyone just spend the rest of their lives in a perfect dream, but he knows peace never lasts long in the shinobi world. Even this temporary peace was hard-earned from the Third War, and already behind it were many dead bodies that had to be there to let it stay that way. It seems inherent in shinobi's nature to fight and kill.

Sooner or later there will be the fourth, fifth shinobi war. The third had already taken so many lives. As weapons and ninjutsu advance, casualties will escalate exponentially. Who's to say the subsequent wars won't end everything finally then?

So yes, Kakashi doesn't know if Obito's plan is the right answer. But for now at least, it seems to be one solution. If the shinobis are going to massacre each other in the next war, might as well put everyone inside a gentle dream right now.

And he shares this opinion with Obito.

"This plan is essentially putting everyone to sleep to live their own version of perfect reality inside a dream, Obito." he began, Obito nodded knowing Kakashi isn't finished,

"and i don't know if it's the correct answer to our world. I don't know if there's even a correct answer to the death that has to happen for the shinobi world to function. But.. perhaps it is *one* of the solutions. Before we all kill each other in the next shinobi war, at least," Kakashi finishes wearily.

Obito is carefully silent at Kakashi's response.

He had thought more about Infinite Tsukuyomi over the years. In the relative safety of Kakashi's apartment, away from Black Zetsu, had ruminated on the more ethical aspect of it. He knows he's essentially taking away free will, and life on earth will end in a stalemate. No more death and at the same time no more birth. All that will exist, will be the humans left alive once they both achieve Infinite Tsukuyomi.

However when compared to this reality?

Like Kakashi said, there's no guarantee that the next conflict won't end all life on earth as jutsu advances to become even more destructive. There have been 3 world wars and not much has changed even since the warring era. All villages are just a bigger version of clans. Now instead of clans fighting each other, it's villages fighting each other. And look what happens to the minority? The Uchihas were pushed away into the corner, the ones with kekkei genkai were dubbed monsters and hunted down to extinction, the jinchuurikis who do contain monsters placed inside them by others are ostracized.

Despite advancement of technology and knowledge, people have yet to improve their humanity.

If Obito's honest, perhaps the problem isn't the system. It's *people* themselves that don't have the capacity for peace. Hatred, mistrust, fear, envy, and plain bloodlust breeds wherever people are without exception.

And if there's no hope for humans for achieving peace on their own, if the problem was indeed with what they are as a species, then maybe from the start Infinite Tsukuyomi is the only solution.

Obito can see Kakashi's reasoning. It was different from his.

Obito wanted not just peace, but also *happiness*. Had he only wanted peace, killing himself and the entire world would've been an easier goal. That's why he wanted that world where you can be reunited with those you've lost.

Herein the difference between his and Kakashi's motives.

In desiring peace, Kakashi wasn't driven by his emotion like Obito was. He wasn't even idealistic.

Obito *feels* angry at the senseless suffering that had to happen in this world and wants to create a happier one even if he can only achieve it through a dream world.

Kakashi *quantifies* the suffering between this and the dream world and on that basis decided free will is an acceptable loss compared to the amount of casualty.

Kakashi is someone driven by rationale. His reasoning for supporting Infinite Tsukuyomi is pure logic. And Obito is aware enough to know that might be something more terrifying than even his own motivation.

There is no morality in logic. Only gains and losses.

Regardless, it was interesting to get a second opinion on Infinite Tsukuyomi. All he'd heard so far was a fellow Uchiha and a manifestation of said Uchiha's will. Obito was in sore need of a third party's opinion. And if this accidental look at his friend's inner-working disturbed him slightly, Obito didn't show it.

"I promised your freedom. When the time comes, do you want to be part of that world, Kakashi? Or do you want for me to do it myself?"

Kakashi thinks this over too, his eyebrow scrunches as he considers Obito's question.

Does he want a chance to for a better life again inside Infinite Tsukuyomi? Or does he want to be freed from even that?

At this ultimate question of life, he remembers something from his past. Something his subordinate in ANBU once said when they're resting in a forest after a mission.

We don't know what kind of people we truly were, until the moment before our deaths.

Hound had turned to Weasel when he heard that. Or rather, Kakashi turned to Itachi, because at that moment they were not wearing their masks.

The Uchiha prodigy was staring at their campfire, eerily calm as the flames are reflected on his obsidian eyes.

It was one of Hound's last nights seeing him, before Itachi then killed his entire family and clan within a single night in one of Konoha's bloodiest massacre.

Returning to Obito's question, Kakashi gives the answer he can think of.

"My peace of mind right now is in helping you, Obito. It seems... greedy to receive more beyond that.

But ask me again once we get closer to its completion?"

What *would* he choose at the moment of his death?

That's not something he can answer right now, because he doesn't know yet what kind of person he is.

But Kakashi finds himself looking forward to finding out when it's time.

Chapter End Notes

But first, was it a surprise that Obito's main motivation was Love? ha!

I'd also like to congratulate Uchiha Obito for regaining (selective) conscience.

Now tell me if that's not the most romantic gift Obito can give to Kakashi? His truth and trust.

"I will lie to anyone except you." That's obkk romance right there. (So Obito still manipulative yeah. Just not with kakashi. Look i promised Obito will change slightly, I can't work a miracle here, man's unhinged.)

And that's what Obito needed Kakashi for, folks. To be his ANBU-

er i mean partner against Black Zetsu/Madara. In canon Obito already distrust Madara.

(Man i love Hokage Obito and ANBU Kakashi dynamic too much)

Well this is going to be a long note, but it's mostly my meta-explanation on obkk.

Regarding obkk friendship (chara study):

We like to see them as the best of friends and it's true they're childhood classmates but they only truly became friends right before Obito's death, no?

Pinned under the rubble Obito said "and just when i started to become friends with Kakashi"

To Obito, (him and Kakashi) only just began to become friends in Kannabi.

To Kakashi he should've think like that too, but after what Obito did (the whole "White Fang's a hero" + the eye + boulder), he practically put Obito on a pedestal and that influenced his memory.

Hence the *Kakashi* in Obito's mind, is the one whom he just became friends with in Kannabi. And that's why this Kakashi feels more 'equal' or even 'superior' to Obito.

This *Kakashi* is Konoha's genius who was always ahead of him, not the (currently alive) one who hero-worships Obito.

Does that make sense? Please tell me. It does in my brain, but idk if it make sense to other people.

Regarding Obkk motivating ideology to bring about Infinite Tsukuyomi:

Welcome to (imo) the most horrifying part of this entire fic. Here we see Kakashi perfectly rationalizing Obito's genocidal plan!

The title of this fic essentially "bringing utopia upon earth" was inspired by ideological struggle in the 20th century. As we know, many horrific crimes were committed in the name of building a utopian system of society on earth.

Throughout this story i've been pointing out the burning emotionality of Obito vs cold rationality of Kakashi. I wanted to explore the idea of how either can cause destruction just as well as the other.

Maybe we thought the Uchiha with his emotion is the destructive one, because he feels angry at the state of the world. While Kakashi, although traumatized, could be the calmer one & bring Obito back from his “insanity” with the help of his highly logical mind personality.

But not really.

In this, Kakashi can accept what is essentially Obito’s genocide by rationalizing the pros and cons.

I want to explore how amoral logic can be as destructive as unbridled emotions.

Kakashi's not better than obito, but they do have a different kind of insanity,

Hehe sorry for long note but i had so much fun flaying obkk's mind open.

I hope you like my take on obkk's driving motives and their different reasons for wanting paradise (Infinite Tsukuyomi)
What do you think about Kakashi's acceptance of Obito's plan through the power of rationality?

To me it feels like it's ANBU's habit to operate on cold logic. And that's who Kakashi is in this fic, he's Hound. Anyhow feel free to let me know what you think or if there's part you like or confuses you!

But whew, we've finally established obkk partnership so the time of secrets & manipulation between obkk is over. From now on forward, It's time for Tobi and Hound dynamic as partners.

To those of you who stick around to the end of this very long note thank you and i'll tell you next arc we FINALLY open the circus.
It's Akatsuki Hound debut! (Kakashi's stomach is not wobbly anymore, so we'll make the man work)

(Red Moon Circus) The Orange Clown

Chapter Summary

He watch Tobi sheepishly rubs the back of his head,

“Wow, didn't think I'd find a bunch of Konoha shinobis all the way out here...”

then blatantly lies.

“And it's 8-on-1, so that's not fair!”

Chapter Notes

Hello, long time no see.

Maybe it's karma for making Kakashi's stomach woobly, but i got my own stomach wobbled(?) recently. Not from explosion, but like our favorite ANBU i too acquired a stomach scar.

Anyway i got out of the hospital and now on bed rest.

Thank you very much for your lovely comments in previous chapter! I will reply as soon as possible!! For now, enjoy finally Akatsuki Hound chapter

Arc name:

Aka - Red

Tsuki - Moon

and they're an entire circus troupe. *shrug

Timeline:

We've now entered around shippuden timeline. Sasuke left to (+ killed) Orochimaru, Naruto with Jiraiya, Sakura with Tsunade. Sandaime is dead, now it's Tsunade's reign.

Canon is actually really fast. The entire canon shippuden was only

2 years (based on naruto's shippuden age 15-17).

Yeah, on january naruto return with jiraiya, on december next year, they're fighting Kaguya. Kids these days, saving the world at 17. bonkers.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Obito watches Kakashi kneel in the middle of Kamui blocks, deftly wrapping a roll of compression bandages around his thigh. The ethereal light of Kamui falls on Kakashi, making his silver hair glow and washing out the already pale grey uniform. The ANBU is silent as he snaps on the steeled leg guard, utterly focused in the task. His porcelain mask hung on the other side of his face, tied with a thin shinobi-wire.

Obito exhales appreciatingly at the scene. Kakashi looks lethal in white.

They stayed in Kamui after the last conversation. Kakashi needed to prepare himself and there were things to discuss moving their plan forward. By the end of it, with Kakashi looking *done* and ready to stab something (Hatake prefers reading book to speaking), they've also established how they'll work together as partner in Akatsuki.

Kakashi switches weight onto another knee to adjust his other leg, and -finishing that- rose to full height; In his arm the sword Obito gave earlier.

Obito's eye lands on the weapon.

It isn't Kakashi's old one. That would be sealed along with Hound's other equipments in ANBU's archive. But back in Konoha he'd examined it enough with the sharingan that he remembers its exact measurement and weight.

Unlike the samurai in the Land of Iron with their katana, shinobi uses chokuto, a straight sword designed to be wielded with one hand. The sword he gave Kakashi is a chokuto without an armguard, with light-grey scabbard and similarly pale hilt. Seeing Kakashi holding it, Obito internally congratulates himself on choosing a color that matches perfectly with its new owner.

When Obito handed this gift, Kakashi's eye widened once he unsheathes the blade.

"Obito..." Kakashi breathed out, "...where in Kami did you get a chakra

sword?"

A fact any decent kenjutsu practitioner would be aware of, chakra blades aren't common and the few in circulation are expensive. The specialized steel ore required to forge them are few and far in between; Moreover it takes considerable skill from the swordsmith to make longer blade able to withstand conducting chakra evenly across its length.

This is why the chakra blades used by shinobis are in fact kunais or short daggers; Most sword cracks in places the smithing weren't perfect or even shatter once imbued with strong enough chakra.

Obito merely shrugs at Kakashi's incredulous expression, appearing smugly nonchalant as if he didn't just gave something that's worth at least a small estate. He had made sure to search a good swordsmith for it. Obito had taken everything from Kakashi (or rather, Kakashi had left everything behind for him). With the work ahead, the least he could do is arm Kakashi with a proper weapon.

He relaxes on the block and fold his hand in front him, letting Kakashi more space to play with his new toy. The blade handles gracefully with Kakashi's skill, each swing left behind a white streak. There's a strange look of wonder in Kakashi's normally sleepy eye when the chokuto begins to crackle with lighting chakra.

Obito can't quite place that expression, whether it's admiration for the sword itself,

(Even if Kakashi doesn't like fighting or killing for its own sake like most shinobis *-duty, it's always duty with Hatake-* he's still one. And after their fancy jutsus, shinobis loves a good weapon.)

Or maybe, Obito thinks more soberly, it reminded Kakashi of his father's White Chakra Sabre.

Kakashi straps the sword at his hip this time, like Obito used to back when he was still skulking around Konoha, before officially joining his own organization. With the robe he'll have to wear from now on, Kakashi can't put it on his back like he used to in ANBU.

Once the sword is secure, Kakashi holds an arm out to Obito, mismatched eyes move pointedly from Obito's eye to the black fabric that hung on his forearm.

Huffing at that completely unnecessary *attitude*, Obito wordlessly passes it over.

"I've spoken to Nagato and Konan about you," he disclose.

"Hmm." Was the distracted reply.

Kakashi's face is back to its usual aloofness as he shrugs on the robe of the organization that's been Konoha's (and by extension, his) enemy.

Obito wonders if this is black-ops calling card, this ease at changing their 'face', given how used they are to infiltrating and disguising themselves often as their own enemy. Itachi wore a similarly detached expression back then and Obito might've been playing a fool, but he knew his cousin was only in Akatsuki to spy on them for Konoha.

Just like right now, Obito knows Kakashi is only in Akatsuki for him.

Kakashi's interest in his new 'uniform' seem to be strictly perfunctory. He fiddles with the collar height, shaking the sleeve around to see if it'd get caught in his armguard, and on a whole testing his movement range with the outfit.

When he's done, he turns around completely facing Obito.

Despite himself, Obito's breath hitches at the sight.

Kakashi hadn't put up the hood yet. He stands there in the black robe adorned by red clouds, mismatched eyes watching Obito. While before his image is that of an ANBU of Konoha, in just few seconds it has been replaced with an Akatsuki member.

Before this, Akatsuki never really had a black-ops as their own. Their members are too conspicuous, personalities or fighting styles too bold to operate covertly. Itachi was one, but his cousin is still more Uchiha than he was ANBU. Although Obito heard itachi's advancement to captaincy record surpassed Kakashi's own, Kakashi is the definition of black-ops shinobi in ways Itachi is never was.

Clearing a suddenly dry throat, Obito continues,

"Anyway, I've informed them about you being my partner, so there's

no need for a courtesy call. But of course, should you want to, it's your choice,"

At that, Kakashi raised an eyebrow.

Ah, was he under the impression that he'll be subjected to the member initiation process with Pein, like the others did?

Obito grins and waves a dismissive hand. There are certain perks to being partnered with the actual leader of Akatsuki, which Kakashi would know soon enough. (Not that Deidara ever got to enjoy those.)

"We both know you're stellar at social interaction, Bakashi. "

Kakashi rolls his eyes.

"How considerate of you, Uchiha."

His tone may be curt, but the line of Kakashi's shoulders marginally relax.

Obito shakes his head in good humor. His teammate is still more tense about meeting people than he does killing them, and if that doesn't say something about Hatake's personality.

One day he might have to make his own introductions if this arrangement stays, but for the time being Kakashi won't have to worry about that.

Walking up to his newly-dressed partner, Obito opens a palm up, nudging his chin toward Kakashi's hand.

Kakashi narrows his eyes suspiciously, and Obito rolls his before revealing the item he had in his other fist.

A heavy ring not unlike what Obito wears on his left little finger. This is the one Deidara wore in Akatsuki, which Obito personally retrieved after the bomber's suicide-explosion.

Kakashi frowns at the object like it personally offends him. It probably does.

"Do I have to?"

Kakashi isn't an accessory person. The Hatake had sulked and buried his nose even deeper in Icha-Icha while Obito carefully applied the nail polish to his toes.

"Why do terrorists need to wear nail polish anyway?" Kakashi eyes his drying dark-grey nails in confusion and slight distaste.

"It's part of the look and-" Obito tsked and smacks the idiot when he tries to flip a page with the still-drying hand, "Don't ruin my delicate work, Bakashi"

"Yes."

If he didn't word it this way, Kakashi wouldn't obediently accept. The ring contains Nagato's six-path chakra, something that can't be replicated. Its uses ranges from identifying them as a legitimate member and giving them access to Akatsuki hidden bases among other things. And specifically for Kakashi's ring, Obito had made it even more useful.

"We also use it for meetings, but like I said, that's your choice. It's more useful than the nail polish, i promise." Obito placates.

Kakashi sighs deeply, as if having to wear a ring is a bigger concession for him than joining Obito's little band of terrorist organization was.

"Alright then."

Obito grins and carefully put the ring over Kakashi's gloved index finger. The position indicates where Kakashi should stand on the sealing statue too. Though, Obito suspects his teammate will do his utmost to avoid that particular social gathering in the future.

There's a brief flare of chakra from Obito's own ring and he knew Nagato, and the rest of Akatsuki had received the signal of a new member. Kakashi looks mildly surprised, no doubt having felt it as well.

He brushes a thumb on the back of Kakashi's palm, before letting go.

It's time for their mission.

Obito puts his mask on, with Kakashi following suit and brings the

hood up to cover his hair.

"Come on," Tobi pats Kakashi's shoulder, and between the seconds they've fully materialized in a forest,

"We'll take a little walk."

For someone with sharp senses, it's jarring to teleport from Kamui back to the real world, especially after spending a long time inside the empty dimension. Immediately Kakashi is assaulted with the smell of rich vegetations and everything else.

Wherever they are in the Land of Fire, it's not anywhere close to Konoha. The air is humid and soil damp, more like a dried-up overgrown swamp than a proper forest.

They were supposed to meet Konoha's team head-on but Kakashi knows Obito is indulging him. Having been cooped-up since regaining consciousness, Kakashi appreciates being able to stretch his legs a bit more before an actual confrontation.

Tobi fills their stroll with inane chatters (mostly his), at the same time updating Kakashi on the latest news. The happenings in various hidden villages, which famous (or infamous) nins are trending topics right now, interesting jutsus and weapons even down to the sweet store just opened in Suna.

Tobi shares everything from the useful news to admittedly not-so useful ones like personal opinions on the food he ate.

In the privacy of Kamui, most of what they talked about is in regards to the plan. Now out in the open, to anyone else who might be watching it's fitting for Tobi to prattle on to annoy his partner.

Partner who, coincidentally, had been out of commission for months which to a covert operative basically renders most of their knowledge outdated at best, or misinformed at worst. And in a mission, the wrong information can practically be a death sentence.

Instead of walking on the forest floor, Tobi prefers to make his own path among the fallen trunks and propped roots, at times jumping from side to side, vibrating with energy that exhaust Kakashi just witnessing it. How his partner can perform acrobats while also talking non-stop is beyond him.

Despite already being with Obito for the last half a decade or so, this is the first time they're actually on the same 'team' again. It reminds Kakashi of Team Minato's mission, with some difference. For one, the old Obito didn't have the kind of morbid humor Tobi occasionally slips in and the old Kakashi would've scoff impatiently at any childish gushing over desserts.

And now Obito is prattling on about things that have nothing to do with being a shinobi and Kakashi finds he genuinely doesn't mind listening.

Then the topic touches a person of interest.

“-and they got a lot of cats! He hid it well but I think Itachi almost cried when he finally got to visit with Kisame-”

He tunes Tobi to the back of mind.

Itachi. Weasel.

Weasel was placed in Team Ro before being granted his own captaincy, so Kakashi only knew Itachi for a short time; But even with the kind of work ANBU does, it was easy to see the boy's kind heart...and ruthlessness. As pacifist as he was, Itachi is the sort willing to do what was necessary if it's for what he judged to be the greater good.

Like the Uchiha Massacre.

Of course, Obito had also shown him the truth on that too.

And of course it was Danzo.

Everything -

“-just like our mission in, where was it, village with the big lake with explosives?”

Kakashi pauses the mental track he was on to remember a particular memory.

“Hacho.”

“Ah right! So Deidara-senpai sent a bomb underwater-“

-everything Weasel said to him that day and what he did afterwards finally made sense.

The massacre was a butterfly-effect from Obito’s Kyuubi mishap, but also one tragedy aggravated by Danzo.

Uchiha Massacre, Orochimaru’s experiments, ROOT sabotages during peace talks after the Third War...

Not for the first time Kakashi wonders, excluding Obito, if the councilman is perhaps the single most destructive person to Konoha’s well-being and world peace right now.

If possible Kakashi wanted to meet Itachi for one last time but it seems unlikely. As they’re walking right now Hoshigaki Kisame is guarding the path to the Uchiha hideout where the brothers are to battle, and Konoha groups are heading towards it, which Tobi and him will prevent.

Then again, what could he have said anyway? An apology for failing Itachi as his captain?

It was ANBU’s job to protect the village (and *his* Hokage, though he already failed that too didn’t he?) from the shadows, even against internal threats like Danzo. Yet he was too mired in his own darkness that at the time he never thought about beyond immediate missions given by the Sandaime, who was clearly biased against his own friend.

Still, he can’t help thinking how he should’ve at least been able to see how suspect Danzo is once he exposed ROOT, that the corruption ran deeper than just Kinoe trying to steal his sharingan;

Should've looked more at the village itself, the obvious brewing tension against the Uchiha even in civilian streets.

But more than any of those, he should've pestered Weasel that day, to tell him what was clearly bothering Itachi at the time and how he could help, rather than let Itachi be approached by Danzo.

This is mostly regret speaking, he's aware. It's easy to look back and spot the glaring mistake. Realistically, there's not much he could've done if he didn't know the Uchiha was planning a coup behind the secrecy of their isolated compound.

Kakashi notices a rapidly incoming presence just as Tobi finishes regaling how Deidara and him dragged a giant turtle across a lake. He jumps to the branches higher above, concealing himself among the leaves canopy.

“Tobi.”

“-Hhm?” Tobi looks up and Kakashi gives a signal using an old Kirigakure code.

This is one of those working details they agreed on.

Obito, being just as obsessed as Kakashi was with Kiri after Rin, actually knew the hand sign used by their ANBUs in the Third War. (Kakashi had it memorized when he went after Rin, and Obito learning it after...everything that went down)

“Oh!” Tobi’s stance relaxes on the giant trunk he was on, “Let’s wait here then!”

They stayed waiting for the Konoha group to walk into their ambush. Hound crouching way up in the canopy branches, trying to stay hidden among the shadows and below him, Tobi standing on a tree trunk rotating his arm in a mock-stretch, doing the exact opposite of his partner.

Despite being out of active combat since waking up, Kakashi is much

too veteran to feel anxious. Even if he thinks he should be, in this case. This would be the first time in his life he'd be facing Konoha as enemy.

But the ingrained instinct ANBU disciplined into their operative immediately takes control, uncaring who they'd be up against. The sudden familiarity of the situation ease the restlessness Kakashi didn't realize he had ever since waking up. His nerves settles, focusing for any sign of surprise attack, limbs relaxes and ready to spring into action. For someone who doesn't fight because he likes it, being shinobi is what Kakashi knows best.

Few moments later, a group of 8 shinobis uniformly dressed in beige cloaks burst from the copse of trees.

When they see the distinctive appearance of an Akatsuki member, all of them stop a good distance away. Variations of frowns and scowls decorate their expressions, something Kakashi will have to get used to receiving from Konoha shinobis in the future.

(Not that difficult. It was similar in spirit, although not intensity, to the ones he used to receive as Hatake Sakumo's son, and not much later, as Friend-Killer Kakashi)

Tenzo, of course, and Kurenai. Makes sense to assign a genjutsu expert, given their task of retrieving an Uchiha.

And while Kakashi had 'left' Konoha when they were still Tenzo's baby-faced genins, He easily picks out Uzumaki Naruto from the rest, thanks to Minato-sensei's flashy hair, and Haruno Sakura's similarly outrageous one.

Inuzuka Kiba, Hyuuga Hinata, Aburame Shino.

Kakashi catalogue the clan kids and their skill except the one that wasn't in the genin roster back then.

With black hair, eyes and an apathetic expression similar to Sasuke-no.. that wasn't Uchiha's brand of apathy.

He recognize that blankness, it reminded him of Kinoe.

It doesn't take a prodigy to guess why Danzo slipped in his soldier in a mission concerning Uchiha Sasuke. That old warhawk must've covets

the last 'easy' sharingans since Kakashi is (was) dead and Itachi's would be impossible to get.

If Kakashi recognized the kid, Tenzo would too.

Now here's the question: Is Tenzo being forced to cooperate by the higher-ups, or is this a situation similar to when Kakashi saved Kinoue back then?

Speaking of, Tenzo doesn't notice his presence way up in the canopy.

Tsk tsk, when did his kouhai become so careless? Probably lulled by the sheer number advantage and their emotionally stressful objective.

They seem to be using the Inuzuka as their main tracker. But during his years of service in Konoha, no one else, not even the Inuzukas, had more ninkens per person than him. 8 ninkens would considerably reduce their searching time, but the fact that they're here now means Kiba had done well.

Hm.

Kakashi nudge the thought away. He needs to stop thinking about what he could've contributed were he on Konoha's side.

He's their enemy now.

He looks at Tenzo's kids who glare at Tobi with a bit more animosity than the rest. It is *their* teammate that Tobi is stalling them from.

Kakashi knew of Naruto and Sakura (and Sasuke) through Tenzo, having never bothered to introduce himself.

In Naruto's case though, Kami knows why but Sandaime already forbade anyone from interacting with Naruto from the boy's childhood (A command Kakashi can't see the logic behind, given that the entire village practically already knew anyway. It's like Sandaime wants the boy with the 9 tailed beast inside him to hate the village? Then again, Kakashi's not the Hokage, so what do he know. He knows he isn't usually one to question a Hokage's decision, but this is one that makes him secretly doubt if there's wisdom in Sandaime's decision. This, and

giving Danzo lenience as much as the old man had. Kakashi wonders what would it take for Sarutobi to take action against his old friend. It didn't get any more obvious than a murder attempt)

The rest, he doesn't see any point. Haruno came from civilian merchant family, a background as far from Kakashi's as possible. As for Sasuke, it's likely as the other last sharingan user, Kakashi would be the one sent to subdue or kill him should the boy get any bright idea to betray the village like (at the time, when Kakashi still didn't know Itachi's truth) his older brother did. There was no need for him to make acquaintance with the last Uchiha, not with that hypothetical sword ever-present over their head.

Plus he'll concede Obito had a point earlier. Kakashi's social skills are *stellar*.

It was only because early in his new tenure, Tenzo begged him with that pitiful puppy-eyes his kouhai somehow still retain after years in ANBU, that Kakashi gave him some teaching tips. Tenzo, being absolutely clueless regarding his new job, had came to Kakashi for advice. Nevermind his senpai's own teaching experience only extend to ANBU recruits. Those who passed for ANBU is already the cream of their shinobi crop. Kakashi is used to his students already having enough skill and personal initiative to understand his teaching.

Only ever having black-ops as student also means Kakashi doesn't have any advice for teaching green shinobis, but what he does know is where and how improvements can be made. It's up to Tenzo to reinterpret his advice into usable lessons for the genins.

Like the amount of chakra Naruto has means he probably can fasten his training pace with multiple Shadow Clones; what Sakura can do with her above-average chakra control; and Sasuke who despite being a fire-breathing Uchiha, curiously has Lightning Affinity just like he does.

Then each of Tenzo's students went away after the Chuunin Exam to the Sannin. Naruto with Jiraiya-sama, Sakura with Tsunade-hime, and Sasuke went (in manner of speaking) to the Snake for his revenge quest.

Which resulted in the situation right now.

It's safe to presume Jiraiya-sama might've taught Naruto Minato-sensei's jutsu, Rasengan. And depending her career choice, Sakura either inherited Tsunade-hime's infamous ability to mend a bone or pulverize it. Or both.

He has no way of telling all this to Tobi below him.

Not like it matters to someone who can phases through anything. And his partner knew it too, hence that cocksure confidence.

He watch Tobi sheepishly rubs the back of his head,

“Wow, didn't think I'd find a bunch of Konoha shinobis all the way out here...”

then blatantly lies.

“And it's 8-on-1, so that's not fair!”

“*Tee hee!*”

Turns out it was moot point to theorize about Jiraiya-sama because Naruto immediately uses Shadow Clone to make Rasengan

-and proceeds to literally go through Tobi to the utter confusion of the blond, his clone, and everyone else watching except Hound.

He'll never say this out loud, but Tobi's antic is entertaining...so long you're not on the other end of it.

As Naruto plunges into the shallow pool behind, Kurenai narrows her eyes at Tobi, possibly checking for genjutsu.

Tenzo's voice calls out to one of the kid with round-rimmed glasses.

"Shino."

Secret clan technique. Of course. Though that won't work with Kamui.

Millions of insects swarm from the Aburame, engulfing Tobi who acts disgusted. Obito likes bugs.

"What the- How can this be?"

Even the Aburame insects look as perplexed as their owner is, buzzing around the empty spot their meal was supposed to be.

"My bugs, they just....lost him,"

Shino was at loss for words, but that about sums it up perfectly. The rest of the group looks similarly bewildered.

Neither requiring hand seals nor summoning tattoos, Kamui is a space-time jutsu transcending that of Minato-sensei's. Not that these particular Konoha groups would know about Hiraishin.

Tenzo frowns, brows knitting in confusion and the look so familiar that Hound immediately remembers the apology and basket of walnuts he one-sidedly promised to send.

Maybe later.

They got very annoyed with Tobi right away, something Hound can commiserate with. He knows what it's like, fighting a clown who interrupts your mission out of nowhere and most of all, being unable to land a single hit on said clown.

Tobi once made him think he had literally lost all his marbles, but this Konoha group has the advantage of: Not being alone in a dark Kiri forest; Not being on the verge of chakra exhaustion; and most of all:

them being somewhat mentally stable.

Hound observes Tobi nimbly sidesteps the Inuzuka kid's careless attack.

Tobi, don't embarrass the kid in front of his social peer like that, he mentally chides his troll of a partner.

Then a loud voice draws Hound's attention to it, and everyone else's attention to him.

"Hey hey who's that? I've never seen that kind of Akatsuki member before," Naruto quips, pointing in the exact direction Hound is looking down on them this entire time.

Ah, the fall must've made the boy look straight upward.

Hound had expected being exposed. He doesn't underestimate them (or overestimate himself) that much to think he can keep himself hidden for this entire confrontation.

What he didn't expect was Naruto finding him out through an accident.

This kid and his dumb luck...

"Wha-" some of the kids began to turn their heads up but Tenzo's quickly stops them.

"Keep your eyes on the enemy in front!" Tenzo orders, then "Hinata!"

These kids are trained, but not enough that it becomes their second nature. Naruto is already keeping an eye on the new threat, meanwhile in front of them there's still Tobi. But these are mostly clan kids. Understandably their training would focus on their own clan technique rather than for general close combat.

While Tenzo had to warn the other kids out of their reflex, the ROOT kid's gaze didn't even twitch away from Tobi.

Yeah, definitely black-ops.

Following where Naruto's pointing, Hinata activates her dojutsu and reveals Hound's more precise coordinates to her teams.

Instantly the Konoha group fall back even more. Hinata and Tenzo keeping their eyes on Hound while the rest focus on Tobi.

Following his revelation, the atmosphere turned tense. Tobi had been jovial, and it's obvious the Konoha groups also didn't see him as that much of a threat. Now with another Akatsuki member revealed, it becomes a different kind of situation entirely. For all they know, this could easily become a Zombie Combi and Team Asuma situation. Having been disarmed by Tobi's idiotic front, suddenly now it seemed everyone in Konoha groups realize they could be fighting for their lives.

Well they can be wary of him all they like, Hound doesn't intends to join the fray just because he was found out.

"Oi you up there!" Naruto yelled louder this time, as if Hound couldn't hear him the first time.

"Who are you, Hoodie!?"

...

...Hoodie?

Hound exhales. Below him, Tobi choked with a noise that's more Obito than the idiot clown he's pretending to be, but smoothly passing it as an exaggerated cough.

The kid hasn't changed much. Naruto is still a very... peculiar shinobi. And what kind of shinobi just straight up ask the enemy and expect to be answered?

More to punish Naruto, he opted to not reply.

An awkward silence, doubly enforced by the sound of the forest animals, stretches at Naruto's question.

... (a small bird landed at the no-man's-land between Tobi and the Konoha shinobis. It pecked the ground a bit and flew away with a single, squirming worm)

“..A-Ahaha! You mean Tobi’s partner? Don’t worry! Tobi’s partner is just shy, so Tobi will talk enough for both of us!”

Tobi flails his arms, dragging some of the attention back to himself.

More like Tobi will be *irritating* enough for both of them.

But shinobis aren’t stupid, much less Konoha’s. If they see a weak link, they’ll target that instead. Since their effort with Tobi so far hasn’t produced any result, Hound sees the moment they identify him as such. He jumps before Tenzo’s Mokuton could sneakily bound his feet.

“Tsk!” his kouhai adorably curses. *Hmm, maybe 2 baskets.*

“Hey, attacking Tobi’s partner who didn’t do anything is just unfair! Eei, take this!” Tobi pretended to bluff a jutsu, aggravating them even more.

Hound flits from one tree to another avoiding Tenzo’s attempts until finally landing some feet away beside his partner.

“They’re both not on the list Kabuto left behind” Tenzo’s gaze flicks between the two Akatsuki members blocking their path.

“Oh that’s because we’re new to the company. Nice to meet you!” Tobi waves amiably with one hand cocked in his hip, while Hound stands in silence. In this distance, his mask would be obvious.

Tenzo's eyes widens imperceptibly.

Pragmatically he could've chosen any other mask, conceal his identity completely and make his future movement easier.

But...

In the dim of the lab cave, Kakashi saw Obito comes closer until his body completely block the light, bathing him in shadow. Kakashi turn to meet Obito's eye, which remain black as it crinkle upwards. An expression like soft satisfaction replacing the glower that is now ever-present on his formerly expressive teammate's face,

A hand, caressing Kakashi's hair as if he's a particularly precious thing Obito just obtained, and the Uchiha was afraid to accidentally break it.

Then the black pupil look downward, at the porcelain mask in Kakashi's hands.

In a pleased sigh, sounding very much like the cat who got his bird,

"I admit, I've become quite fond of it."

And as inefficient as it is, that is (mostly) why he ends up still with Hound's mask.

Hound does nothing in the face of Tenzo's accusing stare. He knows Tenzo is dying to ask, but it appears his kouhai remember they're on a time-sensitive mission.

Tenzo visibly squares up and orders the teams to break through. The Konoha groups split into two, Kurenai's trying to get past Tobi while Tenzo's are brute-forcing Hound.

Trusting Tobi to handle the other team and ignoring his partner's gleeful shout "*Whac-a-mole no jutsu!*" Hound swerves aside to avoid the shurikens Sakura threw, and as he rolls away from Tenzo's wooden blocks, he snatches Naruto's kunai on the ground to hurl it at the curious beast that came toward him from the sky.

The monstrous bird exploded in a burst of black water. No. Ink?

This must be the ROOT-kid's jutsu.

He observes the boy writes something on a scroll and from it a lion-like creature came to life. Backing away from a massive claw swipe, he uses the wooden platform Tenzo unintentionally created to jump and deliver an upward kick through the creature's belly, shunshin-ing away before the ink could rain on him.

He's not planning to hurt them, but call it a misplaced care, he is also curious to see how Tenzo's students have grown stronger.

Better they get practice on him than on other Akatsuki members who will not hesitate to maim or outright kill them, Tobi included.

The ROOT -Sai, as Sakura had called him, stays behind while the rest charge at him head on. As the long-range support of his team, Sai is Hound's first target. He can't keep track of the endless beasts while fighting.

To the alarmed shout from Tenzo and surprise of the other two kids, Hound ignores them and went straight toward Sai.

Naruto in particular looks very confused as he and Sakura both turn around to save their teammate. As jinchuuriki, perhaps the boy was unused to being ceremoniously ignored by an Akatsuki member.

In an impressively quick judgement call, Sai intuited he can't outspeed Hound and threw his brush away to block a swiping hook.

The kid is strong, but the fact that Hound was wearing a steeled-armguard under his sleeve is enough to make Sai wince in pain, and

Hound uses that momentary weakness to twist his body to do a roundhouse-kick that sends Sai sprawling at Tenzo's direction.

He shunshin away to avoid Naruto's Rasengan, *again*, *kid why*, to Sakura barrelling down on him.

Glancing at the honest-to-Kami crater that could've been the reason for his early visit to Obito's lab again, Hound (almost) doesn't feel bad for kicking Tsunade-hime's scary protege. He was proven correct about her too. Having re-assessed her threat level, he might have booted her harder than the Sai kid and his own intention. The sound made when his steel-tipped sole met her sides probably translates to a few fractured ribs.

Suddenly the only one left standing before the Akatsuki member (as Tenzo's still fussing over Sai, and then Sakura), Naruto's expression is that of grim determination as he make the same hand sign.

Kakashi's mismatched eyes narrow. He doesn't like this.

The kid seems to rely on Rasengan and Shadow Clone a lot, did no one teach him other jutsus? Wind Release is good for long-range attacks, yet the kid has only been using the same technique and tactics since the beginning.

In a way, Rasengan's weakness is similar to Chidori. You only have to avoid the dangerous part, which is the front. The jutsu itself is fine and powerful, but Naruto needs to support it with something else. Kakashi uses Chidori aided by lethal speed, Naruto did use the element of surprise when there's an opportunity, like earlier with Tobi, but not much else.

Granted, the obscurity is also its main strength. Any shinobi is hesitant to approach such a strange jutsu, and it's visually arresting too. Both Rasengan and Chidori are impossible to look away from and that makes the enemy's easier to hit.

Unfortunately for Naruto, Kakashi is all too familiar with the jutsu, being the one who watched Minato-sensei create it.

If this keeps up, the boy is going to keep using Rasengan until someone figures it out. There're still many dangerous shinobis outside of Akatsuki. The only reason nobody haven't so far is thanks to combinations of arranged situations, dumb luck and Naruto's raw

strength as Kyuubi jinchuuriki.

All it takes is one person who knows all the information.

Like Kakashi.

Perhaps another testament to Naruto's dumb luck then, that *that* exact one person has no intention of killing him.

But evidently a teaching moment is needed and he suspects Naruto is the type that learns most with a hands-on lesson.

So he sits back, letting the boy's Shadow Clone finish the jutsu and charge head-on. At the last second, Kakashi sidesteps the danger with lightning fast shunshin and catches Naruto's outstretched wrist. The kid's eye widened, only noticing his target had disappeared too late, but before he could cleanly break Naruto's elbow, he had to disengage to avoid a kunai slash to the face.

"Ow-!!" Naruto's pained cry is cut-off by Tenzo who appears instantly at the boy's side, roughly shoving him behind to join Sakura and Sai.

Kakashi looks in amazement at the anger in Tenzo's glare.

Even back in ANBU, he doesn't remember Tenzo ever letting out a killing intent. Worried, yes. Annoyed, often. But never enraged. Being a jonin teacher really changed him.

Seeing Tenzo so fiercely protective of his charges like this, even if the animosity is directed at himself, Kakashi feels proud. That little soldier from ROOT has grown up to become a responsible leader. Back then, he planned to submit Tenzo's name for captaincy while he was still in Team Ro, before Sandaime had gotten to it first.

The kids notice their teacher's rare shift in mood. Where before they're more annoyed with Tobi, they now look at the hooded Akatsuki member with newfound wariness. While the man doesn't fight with the intention to kill them, unlike Tobi he's also not merely playing around.

Hound stands where he is as they regroup, stance deceptively relaxed.

He didn't make any move to approach or attack, despite just swiftly wiping the floor with them.

"Who are you!?" Tenzo growls as he stands in front of his hurt students, kunai raised on one hand. Tenzo usually fights with his kekkei genkai, so it's rare to see him hold a weapon at all. He must've rushed to save Naruto and had no time to make hand seals.

Hound cocks his head at his kouhai's ire. His main goal was to make Naruto aware of his jutsu's fatal flaw. Tenzo must've saw it as another thing entirely. Nevertheless the kid's a hothead, maybe insinuating Rasengan's weakness as a taunt would make the boy realize it? Or at least Tenzo certainly would. But there's an angry buzzing noises coming nearer and then-

"Ahh what is Konoha feeding all you children, Tobi is so tired!"

Tobi's complaint precede his physical body appearing behind Hound, arms wrapping around the hooded Akatsuki member's neck in a loose hug. Hound feels Tobi pressing up close to rest his chin on his own arm.

The bugs pass through harmlessly as Tobi discreetly used Kamui on both of them.

Shino looks aggravated as he recalls his insects and Hound feel the kid would've swore up-and-down if not for Aburame's famously level-headed temperament.

Kurenai lands beside Tenzo. Slightly behind both jonins, her kids look pristine clean if a little irritated, compared to Tenzo's who look thrashed. Naruto is dazedly holding the arm Hound almost snapped, Sakura at his side working with green chakra to heal the fractured bones.

"You guys alright!?" Kiba yells out. He look desperately wants to see how his teammates are faring, but otherwise keeps his attention on their enemy.

Did Kurenai redirect Shino to attack Hound earlier, noticing Team Tenzo's plight?

Unseen behind the porcelain mask, Kakashi's eyes soften. Even if they're not in times of war, teams who can work with each other will

have a better chance of surviving, and winning.

“So he can transfer whatever weird ability he has with physical contact?” Kurenai muses out loud. Tobi had no-selled everything they threw at him so far, but to think his ability can be transferred...

Tobi giggles innocently and Kakashi just knows Obito is doubling down on his effort to be as annoying as possible.

“Not physical contact, but with love! Tobi loves Tobi’s partner so Tobi can transfer Tobi’s power through love!” the clown exclaims cheerfully, alternately resting his weight on his toes to heel, actually shaking Hound with all the jittering about.

He raises a hand to pat Tobi’s head, if only to signal for his partner to stop moving around so much.

Tobi freezes and huffs out a low, soft laugh that to Hound’s ear sounds more like Obito. Ceasing the manic wriggling, Tobi snuggles closer until spiky black hair tickles Hound’s ear; his partner now behaving more like a languid cat than an insane manchild.

Well...Kakashi supposes, as he absently scratches Obito’s scalp and receives a quiet hum in return, this kind of show is a better distraction than fighting.

He spots Tenzo’s eye twitching, lips flattening in irritation, and Kurenai sends an unamused look with one eyebrow raised. The kids seem to be on varying degree of uncomfortable with this unabashed public display of affection from a pair of adult terrorists, with only Sai looking neutrally thoughtful and the Hyuuga heiress blushes though her Byakugan remains active.

All in all, the type of reactions Kakashi gets whenever he whips out Icha-Icha in public so he’s used to it.

“Stop playing around and let us through!” Naruto roared.

Sharingan perceives the sinister chakra beginning to coil underneath the boy’s.

Kushina’s so- the jinchuuriki is starting to get angry. If Kyuubi decides

to show up even one of its tails, it'd be very hard to hold them back without getting into an actual fight. And without seriously injuring anyone.

Since this is not really his mission, he will follow Tobi's lead. But it's better not to provoke them too much, so he stops petting Tobi and lets his hand falls.

Tobi sighs at the loss of attention but otherwise doesn't protest, still leisurely draped over Hound. His Kamui is still active on both of them.

The ground beside Tobi chose that moment to rumbles and then Zetsu's distinctive mayfly blooms from it.

Tobi turns toward the plant.

“Well? “

Apparently the brothers' battle is over and Sasuke has killed Itachi. The Konoha groups look aghast and Kakashi exhales a breath at the news. Tobi straightens away, retracting his hand from around Kakashi's shoulder.

“As I expected.”

Reflexively, Kakashi twitched at the voice. Its shrill note now replaced by a deeper, menacing one. *This* is the Tobi he's more familiar with.

A hand curls around Kakashi's waist, resting on his stomach. The vision of the forest distorts in a slow spiral. On the periphery, he sees Tobi wiggle his fingers in a cheerful, mocking wave at the Konoha groups.

“Then, we'll play again with you children some other time.”

If Kakashi learn anything new from this encounter, it's that Naruto seems to only use 2 jutsus in a fight and has the ability to concocts a nickname on the fly.

Aloe vera.

How did the kid get to that from *Zetsu*.

Chapter End Notes

Let's keep track of Hound's nickname throughout this fic shall we:

Tobi - Tobi's partner ❤️□

Naruto - Hoodie

Ring:

Put together the kanjis for obkk ring means "blue sky"
(Just a bit of trivia concerning the last chapter of this fic *wink wonk*)

I like Obito who lies as easy as he breathes.

How do you like Hound as Team 7 *unofficial* sensei (through Yamato) ehe.

It always bother me how they just plucked an ANBU captain with Kakashi's history and make him teach a bunch of genin kids y'know?

Kakashi is a genius, he knows weaknesses and how to improve them. He *can* teach.

Just not baby genin.

By the way, so that this arc makes more sense.

At this point it's been about a year or so after Kakashi's death.

Konoha is 100% convinced Kakashi's dead (his chakra was sealed and he exploded himself. No getting out of that alive, they all thought.) and the true nature of his trial was never disclosed to public. Also Obito netted Kakashi before he could open up to

other jonins like in canon, so the only one close enough to Kakashi/Hound who can recognize his (superficial) mannerism is Tenzo.

I want females jonin too so i put Kurenai in action. Maybe it's veeeery early pregnancies, *shrug* up to you.

Hacho village is canon https://naruto.fandom.com/wiki/Hach%C5%8D_Village

And whooaaah this is the beginning of Akatsuki arc
Please let me know what you think, about it or about Tobi & Hound partnership, which part you like or if there's anything that might confuses you !

(And for old reader, thank you for picking up again this stalled fic!)

(Red Moon Circus) The Mysterious Hoodie

Chapter Summary

Kakashi considers the Konoha group blocking his path. This must be karma or Tobi's luck rubbing off on him. What were the odds of him running into a Twenty Platoon just as he was *leaving* Fire Country?

Chapter Notes

Merry Christmas and happy new year soon! Thank you for all your comments and i read all of them during the blank period of this fic and they fuel me with happiness to keep doing my best. I promise to get to them soon!

Eschaton is on-going! So long i'm not dead or incapacitated, i'll finish this obkk because i also want to read the completed story. (does that make sense?) Just been busy with work and life-changing situation.

Oh right, I've also written an extra story that details obkk 5 years in Konoha here. If you want obkk who's still wary around each other.

[**Eschaton Extra - The Totally Fictional Tragic Romance of an ANBU Captain and an Akatsuki Member Who Saved His Life**](#)

Some of the things in that Extra will make cameo appearance here, but don't worry, i intend for Immanentize to be read without people having also to read Extra to understand it. But if you're the kind of person who enjoys hidden references, the Extra can give you that.

Since it's been a while, to recap the premise of Eschaton:

- > Hound met Tobi 6 years ago during Kiri mission & Obito managed to get Kakashi on his side.
- > Konoha figured out their relationship and Kakashi (tried to) killed himself during Konoha's interrogation to avoid spilling Obito's identity.
- > Obito saved him through Hashirama's cells & took him away to recuperate. They established understanding through mutual insanity and Kakashi agreed to help Obito realizing Infinite Tsukuyomi.
- > Hound is now Tobi's partner in Akatsuki.

> Tobi & Hound messed around with Team Yamato & Kurenai
(while Itachi & Sasuke fight in Uchiha base)
> Jinchuuriki hunting!

Kay, here we go, Red Moon Circus is going to be one long Akatsuki Kakashi arc!

Also I forgot Team Taka briefly had an akatsuki cloak.
That's not the one Hound is wearing in this fic. I was thinking more of standard high-collared robe, just with modification. So i draw it, like this.



See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Witnessing how much destruction just a pair of Uchihas are capable of is enlightening. They've practically altered the weather conditions in the area, the place is either still burning from black flames (Itachi's, for sure), or scorched from -Kakashi pauses to scent the air- lighting chakra. That would be Sasuke's. Maybe the kid did learn a thing or two from the Snake Sannin. (It's been years and Kakashi still can't quite get over his personal distaste of the man.)

Obito materialized them right on top the somewhat intact block of wall overlooking the bodies. It had the Uchiha emblem carved into the concrete. Kakashi immediately jumps below to stand a little further

beside Itachi's body.

Itachi, who looks as if he's smiling in death. He always did love his little brother more than himself.

Kakashi has nothing to say on the matter, on why Obito even let Itachi marches to death even though he's planning to reveal the painful truth later. The question of ethic is already long past with the Massacre. Sasuke killed Itachi to avenge their clan and Itachi's only wish was to be killed by his little brother. There's no right or wrong with revenge and guilt.

He can emphasize with Itachi's suicidal campaign, after all, he's on one himself. It'd be hypocritical for him to stop Itachi when Kakashi already secured his own death from Obito.

And in Konoha, there are rules against meddling with other clan's affairs. Even if he has left, Kakashi remembers his father's lessons. Not that it mattered much once he became the sole member of his clan, just like Obito is about to be if they don't get Sasuke some first aid soon.

Still Obito doesn't move even just to check on the kid's condition.

Kakashi doesn't need to be a genius to guess Obito has no lost love for his clan. Even if Obito helps his little cousin, it's because he needs Sasuke for something and not out of familial obligation.

And he does. He needs Sasuke to develop Mangekyou Sharingan mainly as a backup for Infinite Tsukuyomi in case anything happened with Nagato's Rinnegan but also to be an extra help against the hidden villages. Strong shinobi doesn't fall from the sky and Akatsuki's manpower is low as is.

Kakashi sighs and opens his left eye, the chakra drain has since no longer became an issue after the implanted cells.

There's not much damage on the kid's body except the blood around his face and closed eyes. So his older brother didn't physically hurt him too much during their fight since most of the wound is superficial. No internal bleeding or vital damages. That's good, but he is currently in deep chakra exhaustion. Sasuke's already low reserve is dwindling by the second since his body is regulating its temperature in the cold rain. Obito actually needs to move fast if he wants the kid to still be remotely useful for his intended purpose.

There're also massive deep-red fractals on Sasuka's right hand going all the way to elbow. Kakashi's eyes widened, rather impressed. It's tell-tale lightning scarring. Perhaps an A to S-ranked jutsu. Chidori wouldn't have left that kind of marks. Those would need to get treated too in case it goes all the way into the nerves.

So Sasuke would live, albeit barely. Kakashi turns aside to look at Itachi, purposefully recording the sight to memory.

This. This is why he's helping Obito.

Obito may have unintentionally stoked the fire of suspicion with Kyuubi incident, but ultimately it was the higher-ups' decision to give the order. Kakashi understands necessary evil, being the agent of it every now and then for Konoha, but the Uchiha Massacre reeks of someone up high taking the easy way out.

They will never have lasting peace because apparently those are the kind of people who get to make the decision in this world, the kind who think it was acceptable to sacrifice an entire clan for the greater whole. The cycle will continue to escalate into a larger conflict that soon will explode into another full-scale war again and again until the entire world has finally killed each other.

And, Kakashi side-eyed Obito, right now the world still hasn't even recovered from the consequences of the Third War.

Tobi notices the familiar red glint in Hound's mask directed at him, but otherwise says nothing.

The ground contracts and Zetsu's flytrap bulges through near the bodies.

"You're too slow," Tobi jumps down beside Hound and chides the plant-member who countered with their own excuse. Some nonsense about Kamui having the speed of light.

After a brief discussion, Tobi turns his back to Zetsu and leans into Hound's personal space closer than he actually required to be heard in the rain. It's as if they're keeping from being heard by Zetsu, who's tilting its upper-body curiously in their direction.

"Kisame has just left Akatsuki." Tobi said in a low voice, his masked face is almost beside Hound's ear, "I'll see if I can change his mind after i take these bodies,"

Hound, still staring at the bodies from Tobi's shoulder, murmurs his reply, "Then I'll go ahead."

Tobi's gloved hand squeezes his shoulder lightly in a nonverbal agreement and pulls away. He crouches between Itachi and Sasuke, glancing back up at Hound as Kamui activates.

"You'll wait in Tea?"

Hound gives a brief nod of assent.

There's a spiral twist in the space, then all the present Uchihas disappear. Zetsu immediately follows, burying back to the ground after a cheerful wave from the White part. Black Zetsu merely look at him consideringly as they fuse back into the earth.

Hound immediately heads out of the ruined west gate, putting some distance from the Konoha team that just arrived outside the base.

Now that he's travelling alone, he spends extra energy to watch his surroundings. This outfit would instantly flag him and for sage-knows-how-many-times since Tobi dropped the cloak on him, he wonders why don't they just make things easier by not painting themselves as a glaring target.

Fame is a two-edged sword. On one end they're being hunted either by big hidden villages that are starting to move against Akatsuki, bounty hunters, or just trigger-happy idiots who want to test their luck.

On the other end, Akatsuki's current reputation also means nobody wants to mess with an organization whose members are known to single-handedly level an entire small village. Wearing the red clouds are both an act of intimidation and protection. The organization has come a long way from 'just a rather strong mercenaries', now they're also *feared*

Of course, there's also the pride aspect of it as Tobi's previous partner

often lauded about how 'Akatsuki members need to be cool'. Strong missing-nins are both respected and reviled. Shinobi and civilians alike look and treat you differently.

Unfortunately Hound doesn't share Deidara's perspective. It makes him uneasy to be this recognizable. The irony isn't lost on him. *Obito* working behind the curtain while he's the one in the spotlight. And to think his job description was literally called 'dark-side' before.

But Obito needs him to act under Akatsuki's name. So despite how much he wants to throw away his cloak and disappear among the trees, he walks. Gait relaxed and unhurried as it had been when he was together with Tobi.

ANBU Hound walks out in the open the way any Akatsuki member would.

Without a chatterbox beside him, it'd be nice to have a walking companion for future travel and he'd have summoned his ninken if they weren't so recognizable. He hadn't seen them since the trial, and it seemed risky back in Kumo even with Obito's genjutsu.

The last time he summoned Pakkun right after he'd met Obito again, he had informed his ninken that it's likely he won't be able to summon them anytime soon in the future and offered to release their contract. But the pug insisted he still holds it, saying that it would end with the last Hatake. It still makes him feel bad though, maybe he can make them new clothes and masks?

There's an idea. It'd have to be after this mission, though.

He jumps over a fallen giant trunk, the path in front becomes denser with the trees growing closer to each other. This area didn't change much, still an uninhabited wild place even during the Third War. He's nearing the edge of Fire Country and soon will enter Land of Woods.

The wind current drags with it a familiar smell.

Hound sniffed, rather than saw the attack.

A black blade, coated in paralytic poison, grazes through where his shoulder was barely a moment ago. His feet had scarcely landed when a chain-covered metal contraption snaps close around him.

"Did you get him?"

Keeping watch on the temporary cage, Namiashi Raidou gruffly asks the shinobi walking out from behind one of the trees.

The prison opens with a metallic groan, revealing nothing inside. It went away with a characteristic poof.

"Nope," the glass-wearing shinobi shows no sign of disappointment at the failure.

Raidou scans their surroundings, spreading his senses. The tagged chakra appears at-

A light step from the tree just a few distance away. Their target of the past half hour is crouching on a branch, looking down. His bone-white mask is the only thing visible from within the dark hood, its paint makes the man seem to perpetually grin. Upon seeing the design in more detail, Raidou's frowns.

Isn't that-

Raidou tables his observation for now; If they're successful, there'll be opportunity for thorough questions later.

This one isn't in their Akatsuki list. A new recruit or was he simply hiding all this time?

His robe also look a little different from what the other members wore, even if it bears the same pattern, and Raidou doesn't know what that means. Whether he's merely a pretender, an associate, or the genuine article, they'll find out soon enough. His team will operate under the assumption the man is a member as it's better to overestimate than vice versa.

"My, you're a hard one to catch," his comrade smiles at their target, tone jovial like they're fellow travelers chatting in a tea shop. He looks unassuming too, with his glasses and bandana and easy demeanor, but underneath that beige cloak is the dreaded grey suit of Konoha's T&I.

Mozuku is an Interrogator directly under Ibiki Morino's tutelage and his best weapons are conversations. Mercenaries are particularly chatty especially when they think they have the upper hand.

The target tilt his head at them, making him look even more like a feral dog with that mask.

As planned, a burst of ravens from deep in the forest envelops the target. Raidou observes the man's lightning-quick reflex as he immediately disengages, but a chain shoots out among the flurry of black feathers and tangles itself around his neck, yanking the man tumbling down.

Gazeru jumps out to disarm her catch with a suppressor seal, but the body goes poof with a flourish of white smoke, leaving behind a log of wood with an insultingly spiffy green leaf on its tiny branch.

"He's fast, I'll give him that" Aoba comes out after, chuckling as he calls off the raven jutsu. He positions himself slightly behind Raidou and Mozuku. As the Intel Division, his role will come later should the offense group succeed in subduing their target alive.

Raidou and Gazeru shifted stance for a team attack formation; Mozuku is beside the vanguards, looking for opportunity to use Iron Maiden again and Aoba in the rear acts as support and lookout for the partner.

Kakashi considers the Konoha group blocking his path. This must be karma or Tobi's luck rubbing off on him. What were the odds of him running into a Twenty Platoon just as he was *leaving* Fire Country?

He knows about some of them at least. Though they weren't close, Raidou and Aoba were part of his generation. Glasses is T&I, he was one of the Interrogators present in his trial and that's all Kakashi has on him. He doesn't recognize Kunoichi at all, which makes him more wary of her than the others. She has a visible weapon, the kusarigama and a sword on her back. That still doesn't indicate what kind of shinobi she is. For one, Kakashi also carries and uses a sword, but he can also decapitate someone with a space-time kekkei-genkai is what he's saying.

On his own Kakashi's not much of a sensor, but he doesn't want to use sharingan to check her in case any of them has really good eyesight or accidentally got too close. But he does know she's strong from a simple, but telling detail: her long purple hair.

Well the color doesn't matter as much, even if it *is* a tauntingly bright color. But for a shinobi, long hair is an obvious hazard. In the old times, they used to use hair length as a statement of strength just as civilians used it for wealth. The Shodai Hokage and Uchiha Madara both have long hair. Obito wore his long too, once. And there's Kushina, Jiraiya sama, Lady Tsunade, as well his father.

Nowadays not all powerful shinobi have long hair, but it is still true that only they can afford to keep it.

Kakashi considers his options. Kamui is strictly off-limit as they will connect his ability to Tobi. Plus Zetsu might be spying. No need to reveal his cards too much, but judging from Mozuku and Aoba's presence they're obviously prioritizing capture. Ergo, they won't let him escape so easily.

He knows he's playing with fire. If they manage to slap that particularly high-grade chakra suppression seal Kunoichi's tried to use before and trap him in Iron Maiden, that's it. Well, Obito will definitely notice him not appearing in Tea, but figuring out who took him would take time and Kakashi's second trial definitely won't be as lenient as the first one. After Asuma's death, Konoha's out for Akatsuki blood.

Kakashi had heard from Obito, of course. Despite mourning, ultimately Kakashi couldn't hold any resentment with that. If not Kakuzu, then it'd be other bounty hunters trying to collect the reward on Asuma's head. Such behavior isn't limited to Akatsuki.

Still, the village is rightfully angry and determined. The simplest way would've been fighting to kill. That way he doesn't need to worry about witnesses or holding himself back.

The problem is, Kakashi doesn't want to kill anyone from this group. In fact, he doesn't want to kill anyone at all for the sake of Obito's plan.

They can't be in Infinite Tsukuyomi if they're dead and everyone should have equal chances for true peace.

Well...maybe except Danzo. But Obito already has plans for the councilman that Kakashi can get behind on. In fact, he's the second in line should Itachi's little brother fail.

Oh, right, he copied *that* jutsu.

Both parties move in tandem. It's different from before. The previous teams were searching for Sasuke. This one sought him out specifically to hunt him.

Raidou charged first, backed by Kunoichi. A cut from Kokuto would be enough to paralyze a non-medic. Hound kicked hard against the black blade with the steeled sole of his shoe and in the same breath took out a kunai to deflect Kunoichi's chain.

They're not immediately going all out, probably cautious of his possible partner and Hound will exploit that hesitance to end this confrontation as quickly as possible.

It was then the T&I spoke up again, trying to fish for information and distract at the same time. Fortunately Hound is an expert at ignoring therapists and interrogators alike.

"Sooo...you're a new one, huh?" Glasses pipes up while Hound concentrates on not getting stabbed by Raidou, " Just joined?" The scarred man sputtered when Hound somersaulted backward from the assaults and snagged his jaw with the movement.

Raidou disappeared below with an Earth jutsu. Hound flees to the side from a hand trying to drag him inside the ground zombie-style, switching himself with a rock when Kunoichi slung her chain in a wide arc.

Even if he wants to snark at T&I, there's not a moment to catch his breath with these two. He can't break concentration. Raidou is a highly skilled kenjutsu user and make use of his expertise in assassination to catch him off-guard, trying to root Hound in one spot, while Kunoichi is always ready to take advantage whenever there's a lull to disarm and immobilize him.

It's nice, in a way. Unlike with the kids, he doesn't need to worry about hurting these at-least-jonins because they're competent enough to counter his attack. There's a rhythm to this kind of rapidfire back and forth. Like ANBU spars, except if he loses the stake won't be his wallet, but being dragged back to Konoha and getting information tortured out of his mind. No big deal.

Glasses shake his head sadly, like the so many ANBU-assigned therapists Hound disregarded.

"Keeping up the mysterious air, are we? Do you at least have a name to call you by? We'd hate to be rude."

Rude, is Kunoichi almost crippling his ankle with the sickle end of her kusarigama. He skipped and boots her in the temple from which she recovered all too quickly with a glowing touch. So, a medic too.

Glasses hums and considers something. *Hound* grinds his teeth and considers throwing a shuriken at him. He knows where the T&I is going.

He swears to sage if T&I also calls him Hoodie, he's done. When Obito put him in the cloak and gave him his mask, Kakashi hadn't really care what other people will call him in Akatsuki, they could just refer to him as Tobi's partner. Why bother with codenames? After all, once people figured out the flimsy disguise, they'll call him by his real name again anyway. Or more likely, scum, trash, traitor.

He can admit later that it's a bit cute coming from Naruto. Plus Minato-sensei and Kushina's son gets special privileges in Kakashi's book.

But not from a sage-damned *Interrogator* because then the entire Konoha force is going to officially call him Hoodie and oh if that happens he's going to set this cloak on fire and warp back to Obito to demand a standard robe, his distinctive hair be damned. Obito doesn't want him to dye it and Kakashi refuses to be called Hoodie by adult shinobis. An unstoppable force vs immovable object. They'll be at an impass-

"Doggy' wouldn't be too impolite, would it?"

He stumbles his footing and Kunoichi's chain manages to almost smack him in the face. His left arm stings from blocking it at the last minute and if he wasn't wearing an arm guard, that likely would've fractured his ulna.

Against himself, Kakashi's shoulder visibly shakes from stifling in his chuckles. Alright, he can give them that one.

He straightens up and begins forming a hand seal.

And for reminding him how irritating Tobi was when they first met, he's going to gift them a little something *extra* .

Raidou and Gazeru side-eyed each other at the slip.

This unknown probably-Akatsuki hadn't let out a peep since they started this altercation. No taunts, questions, commentaries or even insults. Which was why the curious reaction to that particular word was interesting to Mozuku because it's the only personal thing this

mysterious shinobi had revealed so far. And Mozuku *needs* things to get personal if he wants to get into the head of his target.

Unfortunately there's no more time to fish around because the- Doggy- is going through a series of hand seals dizzyingly fast. Mozuku senses chakra output picking up in the air around them.

Raidou shouted with urgency Mozuku had never heard before in the stoic man. Their captain sounded panicked.

He understands why when an ominously crimson mist begins to form, quickly filling the forest and obscuring even Raidou and Gazeru who's just a few meters in front of him.

Mozuku has never seen a Kiri jutsu like this. Instead of dispersing around the area like a thin fog, it settles opaque and heavy like red clouds.

The last thing he saw before it became just a sea of red, was Doggy standing eerily still in front of their group. And somehow, Mozuku *knows* the man is looking directly at him from behind that white mask.

Doggy slowly tilt his chin toward Mozuku as if giving a lazy salute.

And then,

“Woof.”

For a man's voice it has a soft timbre, a little high too, if a bit muffled.

It also has an unmistakably playful tone.

Mozuku summons one of the T&I prison chambers around them for protection even though he has a feeling that Doggy has left the area.

Although he can barely see his comrades despite their back and shoulder touching each other, he does hear Raidou's irritated 'Tsk' to his left and Aoba's voice from behind.

"Well Mozuku-san....I think he likes the name."

Chapter End Notes

Hound's nickname so far:

Tobi - Tobi's partner

Yamato & Kurenai's team- Hoodie

Raidou's team - Doggy

> Canon things:

How did Kakashi's hoodie stays up during fight you ask? Chakra string. (For those who doesn't remember Naruto, It's like Sasori's control his puppet.

Gazeru and Mozuku is a canon character.

No i am not bullshitting my way through this fic lmao.

Woof!

Please hit me up in the comments and tell me what your thoughts on Kakashi going solo Akatsuki or if you're wondering about something in it!

Mysterious Hoodie chapter is dense since i need to establish the world's situation and Kakashi's establishing moment as Akatsuki member in public, so i split it in two. Next update will be on the 1st and those will be Konoha's side of these interactions!

Also in Eschaton, the adult character does much more than the kids. Even though Sasuke's role is discussed, there won't be much Konoha 11 (12?) action, if any.

So if you're expecting those, uh, sorry.

N.B

(For the people who added this work to their collection, i'm sorry for the belated reply. I don't understand AO3 on a good day and didn't realize there's a request. (there was no notif? I found out when i was editing the main fic and noticed there's collection names in the collection tab? And then spent a few minutes getting confused since it didn't show up when i view the fic itself (which, ofc it didn't, since i hadn't click approved yet. duh)

(Also i checked my rough draft for this fic, it already has 90k words. wtff help)

(Red Moon Circus) The Mysterious Hoodie 2

Chapter Summary

Oh no. How does that clown make himself worse than he already is? An Uchiha?

If Tobi is an Uchiha and Tobi is in Akatsuki and Tobi can turn fucking intangible, Yamato doesn't want to know what more the orange clown can do.

Chapter Notes

As promised, another update on new year!

Thank you for your comments on the previous chapter!! I love reading people enjoying Hound's trolling huehfh.

Also wow, i didn't expect people to enjoy Doggy as much haha!
This chapter is for you then~

Also uh i hope you guys are okay with Hound's increasing nicknames from various factions. Do tell me which one is your fave though, i'm curious to hear.

The second part of Mysterious Hoodie, but not the last of Yamato's beautiful suffering.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Who was that Akatsuki member Yamato-san, the hooded one?”
Kurenai asks after placing rudimentary genjutsu around their camp.

What remains of the smouldering Uchiha base was empty by the time they arrived, but Tobi and the plant-one was definitely there according to Kiba. Hoodie possibly uses jutsu to conceal his scent from sharp-nosed enemy so Kiba can't be absolutely certain with him.

Hinata and Naruto are preparing their meal on the campfire pot. Or rather, Naruto making his own version of their meal and Hinata as red as the beet she's currently handling. Sakura is checking on Kiba's bruised ribs from his reckless attack earlier. On the side Shino leans on a tree, doing Aburame-typical inspection with his bugs and Sai lounges on the branch, writing something on his scrolls.

Yamato crouches by the river, scooping cold water to wash away the

sticky humidity. Rain and mythical black fire is not a good weather combination.

Since both weren't in Kabuto's list, it's likely they weren't a member yet when Orochimaru still was. But they know Tobi appeared in the scene not long after Akatsuki attacked Suna, traveling with Deidara following news of Sasori's death. The fact that Tobi is with another partner might mean Deidara is now dead.

Has Deidara been dead for long then? It seemed just months ago they heard of the bomber's fight with the 3-tails roaming one of Kiri's lake.

Yamato towels his face rougher in frustration. Kurenai joined him by the riverbank, rolling her sleeve to dip her arms in the water. She has forgone her usual knee-length dress for the mission and is now in a standard jonin outfit.

He knows he shouldn't be misled by what was obviously a distraction, but Tobi and Hoodie *looked* to have been partners for a while. S-ranked missing-nins aren't the most buddy-buddy people, even pairs who seemed to get along like Itachi and Kisame still stands a good distance apart from the other. The standards are different of course, since for these kind of people just not killing each other is already a good enough metric.

So Hoodie is used to Tobi's antics and is clearly fine with the close proximity and possessive touches.

The man was also able to suppress his presence thoroughly, beyond a sliver of chakra unnoticed to those who wasn't actively looking for it. Tobi might've redirected their attention with his little deceit and general attitude, but Yamato admits they've been careless; too focused on chasing after Sasuke's trail after missing it for months.

How easy it would've been for Hoodie to catch them by surprise.

Yamato suppresses a grimace. He makes note to add this to his report so everyone else can be extra vigilant with this pair: an intangible ghost and a shadowy assassin.

He sighs.

At least you can still hit the Zombie Combi. The rest of the known Akatsuki's skills are easy enough to understand, if not defeat.

Kisame drowns you, Itachi hypno-tortures you, Deidara blows you up

and Sasori turns your corpse into his creepy puppet army. All pretty straight-forward.

But how do you fight someone who's literally untouchable and can make his partner also?

Sometimes Yamato misses the simplicity of those days when he can solve missions with a little stealth and well-placed slice of kunai.

...Speaking of ANBU.

Even if Yamato hadn't seen it for more than a year, he would never forget that mask. It had tugged at something in him and Yamato just then realizes he misses Kakashi-senpai. Senpai would've known what to do in that situation, would've coordinated their teamwork better-

"Now now Tenzo, what did i tell you about underestimating yourself?"

Ah right. Kakashi-senpai used to chastise him whenever he fretted over his inexperience.

Why is an Akatsuki member imitating senpai's mask? It has no other use beyond sticking a codename with the operative. Granted, Hound is one of the more famous ANBU, but Hatake Kakashi's death was a matter of public record. Everyone who had business stalking Hound also knows that. It's hard to maintain anonymity when your signature jutsu is very identifiable.

Was there a purpose in choosing a *deceased* ANBU mask, or is Yamato just overthinking the thought process of an unhinged bunch of missing-nins? For all he knows, Hoodie, or even Tobi could've just been randomly picking from the bingo book and made his quiet partner wear it for his own deranged amusement.

Due to their covert nature not many ANBU manage to get recorded, but last time Yamato remembers Kakashi-senpai was definitely in the old ones.

Yamato can hear Tobi's shrill voice saying it in his head, can even picture the orange clown closing his single eyehole, index finger poking randomly at an open bingo book.

Eeny~ meeny~ miny~ moe! And it just so happened to land on Hound's page.

Yamato physically closes his eyes to clear both the mental image and

subsequent rising irritation.

A polite cough from his side.

"Yamato-san?"

Oh right, Kurenai-san asked him a question. Yamato blinks opens his eyes again, mindset all professional.

"I don't know yet, Kurenai-san. We've definitely never seen him before."

"What about Tobi?" She queries.

"Nothing on his ability, but we know he partnered with Deidara before and that Deidara was the leader of their two-cell team."

Tobi clearly leads their mission today with Hoodie following his cue. Kakuzu was the one who called the shots with Hidan and they knew Hidan joined way after Kakuzu did. How is team leadership decided in Akatsuki, by seniority or pure strength?

They *really* haven't uncovered enough about that organization, Yamato thinks annoyed.

"You fought him, Kurenai-san. What's your assessment?"

Kurenai turns aside to accept two steaming bowls from Hinata with a thank you. She hands one to Yamato.

"Thank you."

It's a stew of something red, green and orange. There're some mushrooms floating that Yamato fervently hopes came from the rations, and not one of the kids' adventurous harvest.

Yamato scoops a spoonful gingerly. He doesn't trust Naruto's cooking, but he trusts Hinata would've kept him on the right path. It thankfully taste as any beef stew would. The soup is creamy and rich, a perfect fill after running around all day.

He hasn't touched the mushroom, though.

Kurenai looks at the bowl on her knee, stirring it distractedly.

"Physical attack, chakra blast and genjutsu doesn't work with Tobi,"

Fantastic. They're fighting a ghost.

-who can still smack them around with a wooden stick, apparently.

"And during our fight I think... i might've seen a sharingan,"

Oh no. How does that clown make himself worse than he already is?
An Uchiha?

Kakashi-senpai might've shown the world that sharingan can be transplanted, but as far as they know there was only ever one proven case. So sue him if the first thing that comes to mind is an actual Uchiha than a transplantee.

"Kurenai-san, are you sure?" Yamato asks gravely, panic rising.

If Tobi is an Uchiha and Tobi is in Akatsuki and Tobi can turn fucking intangible, Yamato doesn't want to know what more the orange clown can do.

Kurenai bites her lower lip, concentrating on the brief encounter in her mind. She wasn't 100% sure, but she definitely saw something inside Tobi's mask when he discreetly dismantled her genjutsu. She could've been mistaken, but she did fought Itachi once when he infiltrated Konoha with the demon shark. And it had looked similar to then.

"I'm not...fully certain," Kurenai admitted, "but I know I saw something." There's no need to litter their report with unfounded speculations, but an important suspicion should be noted.

"Just think of it as something we might need to be wary about."

Yamato groans pitifully, rubbing his forehead. Kurenai pats his shoulder sympathetically.

Sage-damned Akatsuki and their ludicrous abilities.

They're in the middle of discussing what to do next when a raven perches on Kurenai's shoulder. Its head jerks sideway to ogle them in that typical avian rudeness before going away in a poof.

That's Yamashiro Aoba's summon.

Soon after four shinobis came out of the woods, drenched in...blood?

Both jonins immediately shunshin to the front, weapons drawn. Alarmed, the kids behind them scatter into fighting formations.

"No no don't worry!" Aoba shouts.

"Aoba-san, what happened?" Yamato asks after they validated each other's identity.

"Akatsuki." Raidou's answers stiffly, removing his wet coat in disgust. An action followed empathetically by Aoba. Mozuku and the kunoichi (Gazeru, as they were soon introduced) calmly shrug theirs off, both look disconcertingly at ease with the amount of red liquid on their person.

At least it's not blood. Where'd they get red water around here though?

Yamato furrows his eyebrows at the news. It's not like they've been meeting actual Akatsuki members left and right. Most of what Twenty Platoon found were abandoned bases and underground affiliates while the black-robed members themselves remains elusive. Asuma encountered Zombie Combi because of the Akatsuki's very public, very loud showdown at the Fire Temple. And they met Tobi and Hoodie because it seems the organization was intent on ensuring Itachi's fight went uninterrupted.

Which pair did Raidou's Team encounter?

"Which ones did you meet?" Kurenai asks, looking bemused at their drenched appearance.

The predominantly water user in Akatsuki would be Kisame. Was the demon shark around for his partner's battle?

"None we've met so far. Maybe a new one or an associate, his robe was different."

"Did he wear a hooded robe?" Yamato fishes.

All members of Team Raidou snap to look at him.

Bingo.

Judging from their appearance, looks like it's going to be quite the debrief. At least they'll have more to say about Hoodie than Yamato and Kurenai.

"You guys also met him? So he's a member then?" Raidou asks. Doggy was certainly strong, but they simply haven't fought enough to gauge whether he's normal strong or *Akatsuki* strong. Admittedly that last jutsu already tipped Raidou's opinion to the latter.

"Yes, we met him with his partner," Kurenai leads them back to where Yamato and she was sitting before, their two bowls still half-finished. At Yamato's signal, the kids relax and go back to their interrupted meal. Sai has since come down from his perch to eat with the rest of his teammates.

As they didn't fight much and have reported their personal assessment to the captain, Mozuku and Aoba soon goes away to be lookout, leaving only Yamato, Kurenai, Raidou and Gazeru to the discussion.

"For now, we've decided on his codename, courtesy of Mozuku," Raidou began once they sit down. Shino came this time to offer two bowls of stew for the additional shinobis, which they accepted with a gruff thank you from Raidou, and a quiet one from Gazeru.

Huh.

So the mask wasn't just Yamato's delusion.

It's a meaner name but the Akatsuki himself seems to prefer -or at least amused by it, considering the utter lack of reaction Naruto's received.

"He *laughed?*?" Yamato also asks in disbelief because Hoodie was anything but playful during their interaction. All three of his kids can attest to that.

"That he did. And then he drenched us," Raidou was evidently unamused by what had transpired.

The scarred man explained because Doggy disappeared after imprisoning all of them inside his jutsu, he was worried that other teams might be caught unprepared. As soon as they broke free, he

immediately had Aoba scatter the ravens to find the Akatsuki or any nearest Konoha team. That's how they found this camp.

"No, he was alone. His partner didn't come." Raidou answers when Yamato queried about Tobi.

Yamato exchange a glance with Kurenai. Whether they split at the Uchiha base or before, Tobi and Hoodie had gone their separate ways for the time being. What are they doing?

Raidou's team encounter with Hoodie in Woods give them at least two hints:

Hoodie was leaving the Land of Fire. While that barely narrow down his possible destination, it eliminates Konoha.

And unlike his partner who can appear and disappear at will, it seems Hoodie still travels by foot.

"How did he fight?" Yamato couldn't help his curiosity. If he can drench Raidou's *entire* team, does Hoodie uses Water Release then?

That results in an instant growl from said captain.

"Like a bastard."

Raidou knew of the jutsu Doggy used and how to escape it. But when they finally got out, the sea of miasma exploded outward into thin sheets that pelted them, turning the entire area blood red. That wasn't the effect Raidou remembered, so Doggy must've added it for the sole purpose of annoying them. Raidou would like nothing more than to skewer him with Kokuto if they meet again.

Gazeru sits cross legged beside him, calmly listening to her captain's rants about the ways Doggy plays around with both of them.

Yamato is immediately intrigued; Raidou's character is famously calm among jonins. He works together with Genma as the Hokage's guard, and it's rare for even his troll of a childhood friend to be able to get a rise out of him. Between the pair, Tobi was the annoying one. How did Hoodie manage to ruffle Raidou of all people?

Gazeru speaks up after Raidou finishes.

"He walked in the open, but was able to completely erase his presence. More than what normal shinobi usually does."

Hoodie does that, yeah. It's a strange behavior for an Akatsuki. That organization is *not* known for its member's subtlety.

"We maintained visual at a distance, but it's safe to presume he noticed immediately. He was adept at countering our abilities that we can assume Akatsuki has gathered information on the Twenty Platoons."

Is that why Hoodie knew to avoid Mokuton? He did seem very familiar with their attacks.

"And based on his fighting pattern, I have raised a personal speculation with Captain Raidou..." Gazeru trails. When the captain didn't raise any objection, she continues.

"I have reason to suspect this Akatsuki member," Gazeru is clearly too polite to use their enemy's many catchy nicknames, "is maybe an ANBU, or someone familiar with operating as black-ops" as she says this, her eyes dutifully look down at the ground, as if not wanting cast suspicion on fellow shinobis from Konoha by sight.

Uneasy silence greeted her declaration.

In any village, it's one thing for a shinobi to up and become missing-nin. Another thing for an ANBU. That would've been a personal betrayal to their Kage because ANBUs are privately vetted, some even serving as the Kage's personal platoon. In general, ANBUs are the Kage's most trusted soldiers.

Obvious as it was, no one wants to even *entertain* the thought that one of their ANBU could've betrayed Konoha.

Kurenai breaks the tense silence.

"Of course, we noticed the mask. But what do you mean, Gazeru-san?" she inquires.

Gazeru's shoulder shifted and her expression smoothes over into a cool blankness, gaze sharpening. When she continues, she looks at Kurenai and Yamato directly in the eye, any trace of polite camaraderie has slid away from her demeanor.

Ah.

Not everyday you get to meet an ANBU unmasked. It's still polite *and* legally required not to point it out though.

"His kata. It has fundamental similarities with Konoha's, though there were also plenty modifications to the basic moveset that I did not recognize."

If she was right, then Yamato should've noticed too.

But when he was in Team Ro, 'Tenzo' wasn't required to pass the taijutsu tests beyond what's required for standard jonin level. Kakashi-senpai and councilman Danzo was the reason for that.

ROOT kata has an inherently different style *and purpose* than ANBU's. It's rougher, more reckless and prone to self-sacrifice, prioritizing to overpower at any cost. For one, ROOT operatives had to keep hold on the target even if the team have to go through them to finish the mission.

After each routine assessment spars Kakashi-senpai would make his decision and it always results with Tenzo being forbidden from physically engaging the enemy, only as self-defense or secondary attack. Because Tenzo always inevitably reverts to ROOT's ingrained kata. Kakashi said he had unfortunately absorbed the wrong muscle memory and Team Ro's work schedule meant Tenzo would have no time to train *out of* it first before he can safely use ANBU's moveset in a fight.

A problem that Gazeru evidently didn't have.

The reason Godaime adds a T&I operative to each Platoon team is also to build psychological profiles on each Akatsuki they encounter or spied on, in hopes to make future engagements easier. And from the reports, there is a unanimous result in that each member was observed to be strongly self-serving. Individualism and eccentricity seemed par the course for S-ranked missing-nins of their caliber.

Which is why Hoodie initially confuses their evaluation.

He barely shows any characteristics beyond quietness, nor reveal his intention in fights. Both Konoha teams agreed on one thing with Hoodie: They felt no killing intent even when the Akatsuki switched from defense to offense.

He doesn't gloat like the more deranged members such as Hidan or Deidara, doesn't display sadism like Sasori, nor does he play around like Tobi or Zetsu. There're also no discernible personal motives like Kisame (a good fight) or Kakuzu (money). He's most alike Uchiha Itachi, the confirmed ex-ANBU and the most normal-seeming

member., except what Itachi lacked in outward persona he more than made up for with traditional Uchiha insanity. One doesn't need to say much when they're already known as a clanslayer. And even Itachi replied when spoken to, if mostly to rebuff them in his own aloof way.

With their teams combined effort, Hoodie has spoken a grand total of 1(one) word and it's not even *technically* a word.

But having that second encounter with Team Raidou allows at least one analysis on his behavior: Hoodie's only focus seemed to be on his given task. First to be an obstacle, second to pass through.

Yes, being black-ops would explain a lot of things about this mysterious member.

In an organization comprised of individualistic missing-nins with each their own agenda, Hoodie gives the strong impression of being someone's soldier instead.

But *whose* ?

The air is tense with suspicion. Raidou exhales, "There is...a possibility, but it might be another village entirely."

Everyone piqued at the unexpected development. Gazeru hadn't heard of the captain's own thought on the matter.

"Bloody Mist."

Yamato hears a sharp intake from Kurenai.

That's a name one doesn't hear nowadays.

Of the present jonins (and ANBU), Raidou and Kurenai are the ones with combat experience from the Third War. Raidou was still chuunin at the time, but Konoha severely lacked manpower. And in the frontlines he'd seen an entire platoon of Suna-nins perished inside the same kind of red miasma Doggy unleashed on them.

Komukkekai jutsu, or Crimson Mist Barrier Technique, he later learned its name.

It's a little misleading because it's not truly a barrier, but a chakra-sucking prison. The outermost layer of mist will crystallize, forming a relatively brittle yet solid red dome. The most dangerous part of it is

of course the miasma inside that continuously drains chakra until the captives break free, or more likely, die from chakra exhaustion. Escaping is no simple task either as the mist also disorients sound and obscures vision, making them run around in circle until they're too weak to even move.

Beside requiring mastery with Water Release, the jutsu also requires a significant amount of chakra. Only Kiri's top jonins and of course, black-ops, with adequate chakra pool could use it effectively in battle.

Curiously also, Doggy didn't activate the parasitic property of the jutsu back then and it was anyone's guess why.

Bloody Mist reputation actually reached its apex after the end of the war since that was when the Fourth Mizukage commenced his internal purge and enacted that insane graduation process. Kiri shinobis gradually fled their own village by each days, becoming missing-nins or switching allegiance to serve under other, less unhinged leaders. After the Fifth Mizukage Terumi Mei seized power, Karatachi Yagura's bloody regime was excised and frowned upon. That includes many of the jutsus they once taught (one suspects Kiri want to distance themselves from that bygone era.)

As consequence nowadays there aren't many Kiri nins who even know of this technically challenging jutsu, let alone cast it. Instead of the miasma it once had, Kiri's standard mist technique now produces a harmless normal fog that can be blown apart by a strong enough wind jutsu.

This is Raidou's reason to suspect that Doggy is a missing-nin from Bloody Mist who defected to Akatsuki, along the way infiltrating other hidden villages and absorbing their techniques like Gazeru observed.

The debrief is over and everyone keeps their final opinion close to heart.

Sabotage, information leak, double agents, betrayal, all are touchy topics for a shinobi village.

Whoever Hoodie, or Doggy, is, whether he's a defector from Bloody Mist or other villages, it doesn't bode well to them that there's an unknown Akatsuki member who parades around as a Konoha ANBU.

Since the search for Sasuke turned naught and they have immediate

reports to make, both teams decided to return together after the meal and some rest.

That evening as they hasten back to Konoha, Yamato's stomach twists when he thinks more about the new Akatsuki pair. Just the first encounter already causes him this much unease and they weren't even trying to kill them or capture Naruto. Yet.

First the Zombie Combi and now these Masked Combi.

Hoodie is a blank canvas and is possibly an ex-Bloody Mist ANBU who managed to infiltrate Konoha's, while that clown Tobi might have a functioning sharingan.

But why are there Uchiha and a dead regime's black-ops suddenly coming out of the woodwork, and in Akatsuki no less?

Yamato doesn't like the sound of this and he's going to downright *hate* it if Kurenai-san turned out to be right about Tobi.

One wayward Uchiha is already a headache, he doesn't want to deal with *two*.

Three days of walking at a terrorist organization's pace, and Hound finally arrives in Tea just before noon of the fourth day.

The wave of relief upon seeing a village's gate surprised him, but even Hound admits it had been a rather nervewracking travel. It's one thing to know one's being targeted while on a mission, another to *live* with said threat constantly hanging. He had to keep his senses on high alert all the time, knowing any moment another Twenty Platoon might get the jump or even suicidal bounty hunters who want to try their luck at wasting his time.

He only just came out so Hound's pretty sure he's not in the bingo book, *yet*. But he soon will thanks to this robe. At least Konoha would've put him in theirs and then that would get the word out.

He supposes, he'll need to get used to all of these soon.

Hound sags tiredly into the wooden chair, closing his eyes and breathing in the calming aroma of the teahouse.

A pot of steaming hojicha sits on top the dark cherry table, along with two upturned clay cups and a small assortment of sweet cakes.

Those...wouldn't be for him. He just ordered whatever the jittery waiter told him pairs well with the tea, the both of them clearly wanting to be done with the motion. Hound wanted to be left alone, and waiter wanted to get away from him.

He reaches forward to pour a cup for himself,
then leans back on the chair again, eyes closed.

Hound waits.

He doesn't know who will come. Tobi will definitely demolish the sweets, but he doesn't know if Kisame has sweet tooth. If not, then between the two of them those will go to waste.

The teahouse he chose is one of the bigger establishment, located in the more upscale district of Tea village. He's *really* not in the mood to risk dealing with potential troublemakers usually frequenting the cheaper places.

The building is a big traditional-style wooden house with chairs and partitioned semi-private rooms instead of just floor seating. They took away all the sliding doors in the main area, turning it into a spacious open plan with tables scattered around it. A large sunken hearth sits at the center of the room encircled by rounded straw-mats. Although the interior is dark, there're warm glow emanating from the hung lanterns above and plenty of natural light filtered through the rows of latticed windows located up high near the ceiling.

There're raucous laughter and animated conversations coming from the busiest area. The sunken hearth is no doubt a popular spot for the lone customers to make acquaintance with each other.

Hound is currently sitting in the furthest corner of the room, with solid wooden wall to his front and right and a privacy partition behind him separates his table from the rest of the shop. He had specifically requested a secluded dead-end spot from the nervous waiter.

Few heads turned as he made his way through, most immediately looking away again, body language tense. Others, clearly shinobis, eyes him with clear apprehension and started talking in hushed whispers to their companions.

Right now Hound really couldn't care less about his image, he need to calm his nerves frayed from the trip.

Once the tea looks cooled enough, Hound pulls down his cloth mask and tilt the porcelain one outward to take a sip.

The hojicha has a predominantly nutty, roasted flavor with an aroma of smoke. Not too sweet, earthy. He likes it. Maybe he'll buy the packaged leaves.

"In- in here, sir."

It's his waiter's voice following someone with a much heavier step, the poor man then skitters away before anyone else respond.

The shinobi standing behind him gives off the scent of ocean and blood.

Hound places his cup down and fixes both masks back in place.

It would seems that Tobi was successful.

Chapter End Notes

Hound's nickname so far:

Tobi - Tobi's partner

Yamato & Kurenai's team- Hoodie, Masked Combi

Raidou's team - Doggy

> Canon things:

Komukekkai jutsu

The jutsu name sounds awesome and it should be more awesome than it was in canon. In this fic, it's bloody special shh.

Regarding Tenzo, just imagine people who are used to typing with QWERTY keyboard now having to type in DVORAK.

In canon, Kakashi saw Tobi's sharingan during their encounter. So i think it's fitting that Kurenai notices it here.

That's it friends. I was having fun writing Konoha's many

speculation on Hound hehe. I'd love to hear what you think of those speculations (or your own suspicions heh) !

Next chapter: Hound and Kisame's unlikely combi!

(Red Moon Circus) The Demon Shark

Chapter Summary

“I’d really like to avoid a fight with the Tsuchikage, if we could,” Kakashi sighs.

Kisame had the gall to look excited at the idea.

“Yeah? I’d like to try fighting him once. See what these Kages are all about, you know?”

No Kisame, you wouldn’t *like* to see what the Tsuchikage are all about.

Chapter Notes

After a year, i'm sorry haha. Life happens eh.

But! Somehow after all this time obkk is still my brainrot and i've written more upcoming chapters draft after this so the next update shouldn't be too long? i hope?

God i'm not a writer, so please don't mind me if you spot any wrong grammar and such. I'm just trying to get through to the end of this AU because the exciting things happen near the end for me.

I hope old-time readers who somehow still waiting for Eschaton hadn't forget the story so far. Or if you do, eh, just reread it. I mean there's not much english obkk content right, why you think i had to write one myself? That's right! If no one else feeds you, cook your own food!

New Akatsuki member, new nickname for Hound. Can you guess what Kisame calls him? It won't be that funny or creative though. Me thinks.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Good evening,”

Kakashi wordlessly nods toward the empty seat in front of him.

The Demon Shark of Mist takes a step forward, and-

“I’d rather not destroy this nice building, Hoshigaki-san” Kakashi warns with a tired voice.

A beat. Then Hoshigaki Kisame chuckles. His right hand relaxes and he walks past the hooded Akatsuki without further drama. Kisame grins unrepentantly at the (he assumes) annoyed figure. He can’t see anything past the bone-white porcelain mask with a red, smiling dog pattern painted on it. It’s reminiscent of Konoha’s ANBU mask, He doesn’t really recognize the pattern from any bingo book. Though, anyone could get any animal masks especially during a festival. That’s the *point* of choosing a generic outfit for special operatives. Kisame would like to get to the point, but first.

“Apologies, I was curious.”

Even though he can’t see anything beyond the eyehole, he get the feeling the hooded Akatsuki is unimpressed. Then the head tilts. With that mask, it’s both eerie and somehow, endearing. The man’s behavior portrays the beast painted on his mask well.

“About?”

Oh, just the small things, you know. Like the fact that the fourth Mizukage-who was Madara- *who was Tobi*, declared this man as his partner, and then told Kisame to hunt the 5-tails with.

Or how Madara’s partner was never formally introduced to the remaining Akatsuki, even if Kisame supposes their numbers have dwindled too much to still care about such formality. Still, Pein and Konan would’ve wanted to know who recently joined their organization and Madara must’ve exerted his authority.

His different robe aside, everything about the new member piques his curiosity and despite Madara’s clear avoidance with his questions, Kisame feels he’s entitled to few basic informations.

Skill level is an important question.

Kisame has no doubt anyone vetted personally by the Fourth Mizukage would be skilled, but he’s a shinobi and he still prefers to judge for himself. Especially seeing the man just picked an obviously vulnerable position to sit at. Either he’s oblivious, or too strong to care.

At least the last question was answered by that demonstration. Kisame had suppressed any chakra usage and kept his movement minimal, planning a simple quick strike. Madara never told him not to kill his

partner and if the new member was such a weakling, then he shouldn't have been in Akatsuki in the first place.

"Why show your back to me, for one."

The man was skilled enough to do that, so this is more Kisame's curiosity.

The hooded Akatsuki doesn't answer, instead he pours a cup for Kisame, then refills his own cup. He brings it close to face, then with practiced dexterity, hooks both index finger on the porcelain mask and drags down a cloth mask with his middle finger at the same time. Must be hard living while constantly wearing a double mask, Kisame muses.

Kisame does Madara's strange partner the courtesy of not looking too hard, and drinks his own tea. When he thinks the other man wasn't going to answer his earlier question, he hears a weary whisper.

"Maa, I don't... feel like looking at people for now,"

After saying so, the man deflates into the chair with a large, exhausted sigh as if merely conversing is taking a lot from him.

Kisame stares at him.

Well.

He can understand, sort of. Itachi-san used to sulk in a corner whenever his mood swings too low.

Then he thinks about this man's actual partner, Madara, who is also *Tobi*, and gets curious again on how such a pair would work together on a daily, hourly basis.

- - -

Kisame doesn't know how the man tracked him to this area, but one second there's nothing, and then suddenly the space behind him twists and *Tobi* comes out of thin air.

It was one surprise after another. First how *Tobi* was actually alive, and then the clown of Akatsuki turns out to be the Fourth Mizukage

himself.

The man looks different with short hair, but the distinctive scars and that menacing blood-red eyes can't be mistaken. Kisame follows the man, heading toward the top of the steps.

"*Your* partner." Kisame emphasizes confusedly at Madara's back.

Now that he knows who Tobi is, it puts things in a different perspective. Deidara was 'Tobi's' partner, but with how Madara phrased it, it seems the new member is *his* rather than *Tobi's*. That means, they know Tobi's true identity and oh Kisame is too intrigued to leave Akatsuki now.

"Yes," Madara turns around once they entered one of the tree houses, "Will that be a problem?"

Yes, you didn't even tell me their name.

But with people like Yagura and Madara, one must always be diplomatic about wording concerns.

"No, but i've never met them," It must be the new member he sensed initiated a few days ago. It was strange that leader-sama didn't call them for a meeting. Either Madara exerted his authority, or there were too few members in the organization to care about such formality now. Kisame was busy with Itachi-san's business anyway, and afterward, he had immediately left.

Madara hmmed.

"*He*'s skilled. You won't need to worry about guarding your back,"

A skill commendation from the Fourth Mizukage is nothing to sneeze at, Kisame is assuaged in that aspect. The personality side however... Madara seems to hesitate before continuing, clearly picking and handing out the information carefully. Now Kisame is even more intrigued.

"He's a bit like...Itachi, but could be more... hrm.. annoying. Do **not** try to see behind his mask"

Well that's... not so bad. Somehow he expected unhinged mental issues like Hidan or Kakuzu or Sasori. How did Madara find a sane S-class missing-nin?

And mask...so this man is hiding his identity like Madara did. *Does .*
Okay Kisame can deal with that too.

Madara jerks his head like he just remembered something. He sounds pinched, like he's eating something sour. He even massages the bridge of his nose as if keeping a headache at bay.

"If he pulls out a...book and starts reading, for your own sake, just.. don't look at it."

Huh?

"I... see." Kisame lies.

Madara stands up, clearly deeming he has given Kisame enough information. Procuring from that weird air-space jutsu, Madara hands over a rather impressively heavy pouch of ryo's, to which Kisame holds awkwardly in one hand, confusion obvious. They usually receive travel expenses from Kakuzu or Zetsu, after the stingy bastard croaked.

"No need to spare any. Tell him to handle the jinchuriki transport and. Oh right."

Like some kind of demented magician, Madara makes another item appear from thin air on his hand. A simple storage scroll.

"His travel kit. Give this to him, I forgot to when we separated,"

Kisames slip the scroll and money pouch inside his cloak, "of course, Mizukage-sama. Is there anything else I should know about working with your...partner?"

Madara shakes his head, "Better see how he's like for yourself."

The conversation is definitely done with how air starts to shift around Madara, who had put on his mask, becoming Tobi again. Except...It seems that now Tobi no longer keeps up the pretense with Kisame because when Tobi addresses him next, he does so with Madara's voice. Needless to say, it's jarring to see the face Kisame had associated with so much flailing tomfoolery now speaks with a voice that commanded his respect so many years ago. Kisame would just

have to get used to it, he guess.

"It's good if you can get along, but do keep your distance ...Kisame."

It takes years of experience to keep his body relaxed in the face of the sudden chakra pressure Tobi unleashes.

Kisame nods dutifully and Tobi finally fully disappears.

He blew out a breath he didn't realize he was holding.

That was the first time Madara shown hostility toward him. Who is this part-

"Oi Tobi, if you have time then help me test my new C-4, hn!"

"Te-hee~ no way Deidara-senpai, Tobi is going to visit Tobi's special friend~"

"Ha? what friend? Oi Tobi get back here, you-!"

...Wait. Was he the one Tobi used to-

- - -

...Is it just Kisame but why does his partner, temporary or not, have to be such an antisocial, quiet bunch? Granted, Kisame only ever paired with 2 so far, but when it's 2 out of 2, that's a 100% rate of antisocial partners. It's not like Kisame likes talking that much, but even he would like someone else to start a topic for *once*.

Like Madara said, he's similar, in a way. To Itachi-san.

Since they left the teahouse he hasn't said anything else beyond a thank you to the server once they paid the bill. Kisame naturally leads the way, automatically taking charge. And also because he's the one who knows where to go. Samehada tracks a massive amount of chakra

some few kilometers outside Tea Country.

When it comes to catching jinchuuriki, it's better to be quick lest they're back in the protection of their hidden village. But Kisame doesn't know anything about the hooded Akatsuki, and while he's rather confident that he could handle Gobi and any other possible hindrances, it'd be good to at least familiarize with each other more if they're to work together on a mission. And although Kisame trusts his own ability, he's not arrogant. Pride is the first step to death. The beasts beyond the four-tails are on another level and depending on Earth's reaction, they might have to fight alongside each other.

Besides, the man sounds wiped physically and emotionally. A night's rest wouldn't hurt.

That's why they're currently at an inn on the border of Tea, and it's one of the nicest ones Kisame ever experienced during his stint with Akatsuki. Madara had given him funds for both of them, and no doubt the generous amount is thanks to the hooded Akatsuki's presence.

Kisame and Itachi-san never received such generous allowances from Kakuzu. Not that he minds, luxury was never a big priority to him. What they received was enough for a two room at a standard inn and more than cover Itachi-san's cafe spending.

This inn, though, is absolutely upper-class.

Because with money comes more privacy. Both from the location and the staff's policy. And... Kisame has a niggling feeling that Madara *wanted* him to splurge, what with the obscene amount of travel fund he gave for a relatively short mission.

So he got them an adjoining room, complete with its own hot spring bath, in case Madara's partner wants privacy with his double-mask life.

They checked-in just as the sun set and immediately parted ways into their respective rooms without much else said.

Kisame bathed, had dinner, and slept a full night's rest. A rarity in their occupation.

It's now late into the hour of Ox. They're due to head out in a few hours. He's brushing Samehada in the shared living room when the

shoji slides open and the hooded Akatsuki saunters in and sits down at the chabudai

“I suppose we should talk more now,”

Kisame regards him. There’s more energy to the man’s body language and voice. Where before he speaks so low that it strains Kisame’s ear just to catch what he said, now his voice sounds the normal kind of quiet.

“Sure,” he stops brushing Samehada. Letting her down gently on the ground, he stands up and stretches.

“I’ll brew us some tea,”

It was a habit with Itachi-san, who was prone to coughing fits if he didn’t wet his throat regularly while they chatted.

“Thanks,”

Kisame works quietly, heating up the pot, preparing the leaves they bought from the teahouse, and arranging snacks on the tray, all the while the hooded Akatsuki observes him from the chabudai.

“You seem knowledgeable about tea,” the man comments when Kisame puts down the tray, complete with two upturned cups, a steaming pot, and assortment of snacks.

Kisame offers a cup, which the other takes respectfully with both hands.

“When you worked with Itachi-san for long enough, you pick up on these things,”

No point in hiding his history in the Akatsuki. Madara likely had told his own partner everything there is to know.

The man is quiet. Kisame doesn’t know what’s on his mind and that’s rather novel, he hadn’t met anyone as mysterious since Tobi -*turned Madara-turned Fourth Mizukage*.

“I’ve been meaning to ask few things, though,”

“Hm?”

“That’s a bold choice of mask.” Kisame fish.

The man tilts his head again. Kisame wonders if his similarity to the beast painted on it is the reason the man picked that specific mask.

“That’s not a question,”

“My question is implied,” because unless festival vendors start selling *much* more expensive porcelain masks these days, he’s fairly sure that one belongs to Konoha’s ANBU.

The man exhales shakily, or that might’ve been an aborted laugh.

“Picked it off a corpse. It looked nice.” Madara’s partner shrugs.

Well not that Kisame expects him to tell.

“You get one more and then *i’m* asking,”

Despite being brushed off, Kisame laughs good-naturedly. Prodding for clues when someone had clearly taken the trouble to hide themselves was rude on his part. Still,

“That wasn’t fair, you didn’t even answer my question.”

Another shrug.

“My answer is implied,” *Oh cheeky bas-*

Okay so *now* his personality starts to shine through. Kisame can begin to see how this man survives being partnered with Tobi.

“Alright, then my other question: what should I call you?”

It’s not like he can keep using ‘oi’ or ‘hey’ or just expects the man to know when Kisame is talking to him. Or.. maybe he can. There’s only two of them. But not having a name to a face is simply...alienating. If they’re going to be temporary partners, Kisame at least needs to be able to call him something.

The man crosses his hand and stare at the table, looking deep in thinking. Whatever he gives won’t be a real name and Kisame’s fine with that. Just give him anything.

“Well *they* might refer to me as Doggy soon. So you can just use that,” the man sighs.

Uh.

What? Who might? And why?

How is it that a simple question leads to even more confusing questions?

And *Doggy* is a bit.... Kisame's not comfortable with swearing usually; Moreover, calling someone he at least doesn't look down on by insulting names doesn't sit well with him, even if the person himself told him to.

"Aa, I don't think I'm comfortable with that," he says honestly.

Plus, if this man is who Kisame thinks he might be, Madara might murder him if Kisame calls him that. Or make his life very hard. No thanks, Kisame still has plenty of self-preservation left in him.

"...guess i'll just call you Boss' partner, then."

Kakashi frowns.

"I'm not leader-san's partner, Hoshigaki-san"

"Indeed, you're Tobi's,"

He stills. Kisame looks straight at him and for a few seconds they sit in silence with unspoken conversation hung in the air.

Tobi had revealed his mask to Kisame, of course, that's how he persuaded the shark-man. Which means among Akatsuki, everyone now knows who Tobi is. Well, Who Tobi *said* he is, at least.

And Kisame basically told Kakashi that *he* knew.

Now question is, what should Kakashi signal? That he's also in the know, or should he pretend to be a clueless partner like Deidara?

Akatsuki is split. Pein and Konan had different goal than Obito. Now whether Kisame's on Obito's side...remains to be proven. But from what Obito told him, Kisame is a good asset. So Kakashi decided not to overcomplicate things.

"I see."

It's not the time to reveal his own identity yet, however.

The Demon Shark maintains eye contact with him for a while, breaking into a grin, "yep. You can call me Kisame, seeing as we'll be temporary partner and all,"

"Alright. Kisame, "Kakashi nods. "Now it's my turn. What's the plan with Gobi?"

Kisame looks at his weapon on the ground and pats it lovingly.

"Well Samehada here is tracking a really large chakra signature near Earth, so we'll follow it."

That's.. It?

Kakashi is.. dumbfounded. Sure, he himself also uses ninkens to track scent. Why should a chakra-tracking legendary sword be different? And tracking a single shinobi in this world is like finding a needle in a haystack, especially if they're skilled. That's a shinobi's modus operandi after all, *hiding*. Granted some aren't as good. Kushina's son, for example. From what Kakashi heard from Tenzo, is as obvious as they come. Even Minato-sensei didn't stand out *that* much and he also had blond hair.

"Tenzo, why is your kid so..orange?"

Tenzo sighs wearily, as he starts to repeat what Hound assumed Naruto's reasoning for the hundredth time that it became rote by now.

Hound squints. The blur of orange among red and blue was almost blinding as they bicker and snipe at each other.

"Train him harder then, if he insists on being a walking beacon,"

Tenzo closes his eyes and nods tiredly.

The next time Hound meets Tenzo watching the brats, he gives his kouhai a tip about asking a certain legendary student of the Sandaime to help teach Naruto a wind-release technique: Rasengan.

That aside, he has other concerns with Kisame's unusual method.

"What's the possibility of that chakra signature being the Tsuchikage?"

Kisame shrugs, "I'd say about...20%? Kage's reserves aren't usually larger than a jinchuuriki's, especially from the 5 tails up"

That's an acceptable margin of error for a chakra-detecting sword, if it was *other* Kages they're talking about.

Besides keeping watch on terrorists, ANBU had intel on Kages too. And part of what they gathered, the Tsuchikage possesses a nasty teeny-tiny Kekkei Tota technique called Dust Release.

Why is it called so? Why, because it turns anything it touches into its namesake, of course.

"I'd really like to avoid a fight with the Tsuchikage, if we could," Kakashi sighs.

Kisame had the gall to look excited at the idea.

"Yeah? I'd like to try fighting him once. See what these Kages are all about, you know?"

No Kisame, you wouldn't like to see what the Tsuchikage are all about.

But Kakashi knows when to pick his battles. He had a lot of practice reigning in Obito's... more imaginative plans. So he let Kisame daydream and stands up,

"Well we have a long walk before you can do that. Let's head out."

“Sure. Oh, Tobi said he forgot to give you this,” Kisame procures a scroll, which he hands over.

“He said it’s your travel pack,”

Kakashi takes the scroll with a thank-you, and returns to his room to tidy up for the long travel ahead.

Once his team’s rather long debrief with the hokage was over, Yamato ran .

They couldn’t discuss much further than what he and Kurenai already discussed with Raidou’s team. For now, it’s still merely speculation. Nevertheless, it was a strong-pointing speculation.

But now Yamato runs because he *has* to see with his own eyes.

The guard in front of him barred his entry. Owl.

Some bullshit about jounins cannot enter ANBU-designated area.

Jounin ? I was practically ROOT while still in diapers! Yamato indignantly thought. Not that he remembers ever wearing one. Diapers. *Wait, that’s not the point.*

If this was the old Tenzo, he’d have nodded obediently and turn back. But after years of teaching genin brats, Tenzo is now Yamato and Yamato knows how to assert his authority.

Few minutes later, with Deer as messenger to the Hokage office, Yamato enters the familiar building with the Hokage’s direct permission to do so *without* supervision. Owl bows slightly to him in apology.

“Oh, sorry Cat.”

Sandaime never allowed Yamato any ANBU-related access since he was taken out of the roster, but thankfully Godaime Tsunade-sama is more flexible.

He henge himself as any other generic ANBU operative as to not arouse too much attention. Any sensor-type who bothered to would

recognize his chakra is that of Yamato's. But at least visually he'd not attract too much attention with his bright green flak jacket.

It was for a practical reason, but despite himself, Yamato misses wearing this uniform. To most operative - *if they survived* - ANBU may be the worst phase of their life but for Yamato who only knew the black-ops since he was little, it was where he felt belonging for the longest time. For better or worse, ANBU teams have that kind of camaraderie only people who went through life-and-death situations together have.

Yamato let his body leads the way by pure muscle memory. Through the winding white corridors and equally dreary halls, he finds himself staring at Team Ro's old locker room. Tiger told him before that it's now designated as restricted and no team has used it since Senpai's death. The door is locked with a seal but Yamato knows the interior of this room like the lines on his hand.

He passed some operative here and there, and if he let his fantasy go, he could pretend it was just like before.

Except... without Team Ro, this building no longer feels like his home the way it used to.

He has a new home now, outside.

Yamato pushes his grief away, he already drunk and mourned plenty for Kakashi-senpai.

He needs to go. There will be time for a melancholy session later, he has a purpose entering here.

Inside the ANBU headquarters, well deep below the village and twisting tunnels, there's the seldom visited Storage Room. It housed every non-active combatant's effect because not all ANBU operatives were so lucky to have life outside the corps. In fact, most of them live in the HQ, waiting like impatient attack dogs for a mission order.

The room is as nondescript as the other, if one doesn't notice the seal covering the entire place. It acts as a sort of preserver, a time-slowing formula that keeps things as they were the day they're registered.

It also houses mission evidence and records. One of the most effective theft-measures is how nothing can be taken outside without a seal

from the acting Hokage. The mark placed on them will carbonizes it to dust, even when the item is stored in a storage scroll. Better to destroy evidences than have it fall into a traitor's or enemy's hand. It's said that Uzumaki Mito-sama herself created the seal that encompasses this room.

Yamato passes the Evidence section into the smaller backroom, made for housing the personal effects of deceased ANBU. Things like their mask, left-behind summon scroll, family portrait, anything of personal or emotional value ANBU cleared out of their lockers and living quarters is stored here so those places can be reused for another operative.

He bites on his thumb and key in a blood seal. When the ward deactivates, he picks up the storage scroll containing Hound's effects.

Senpai was one of those operatives with dual lives. He didn't hold residence in the living quarters inside ANBU HQ, so his effects were split in two. The ones in his jounin apartment were stored in the Archive office accessible to general shinobi, while anything found in his ANBU locker are stored here, in ANBU's HQ storage.

Since the only thing they retrieved from that fatal mission was his mask and the sole personal belongings in his locker was his infamous book, Hound's storage scroll only contains those two.

A bone-white porcelain mask and a gaudy orange book.

Yamato shakes his head at the glaring reflection of Kakashi-senpai's contrasting life.

He picks up Hound's mask carefully.

It's strange to think he saw this face being worn by a person just hours before, when Yamato was already used to the idea of it sitting lifelessly here in this dim lit room devoid of life.

Yamato knows almost all the scar Hound masks bore, himself present for when most of those were made. And the ones he didn't know, he used to ask (annoy) Kakashi to tell him as a starry-eyed Kinoe. So Yamato remembers each nick and groove of the mask.

The nail scratches from a Suna operative Hound strangled; some chipping from Iwa's pelting rock jutsu, and many more.

It was the same, each scar on its rightful place as Yamato remembers.

Was the Akatsuki's a replica then? But why go into so much trouble?

The man had hidden away all his identity, to the point of wearing such closed-off clothing. But why wear a very distinctive mask?

Does it have another meaning or was it truly mere whim of an unhinged terrorist?

Having confirmed Hound's real mask was still there but no closer to any answer, Yamato sealed everything back to its place, and left the room.

Chapter End Notes

Hound's nickname so far:

Tobi - Tobi's partner

Yamato & Kurenai's team- Hoodie, Masked Combi

Raidou's team - Doggy

Kisame - Boss' partner

Where did i read it, Kisame calling Obito boss? Was it canon or fanfic? I don't remember anymore, but i like it.

Thanks for reading this chapter and still sticking with me. I will finish this story, not because i promise to or writer's honor or anything,

but because seeing obkk still being my brainrot despite years of no new content for it, i've accepted it's part of my life now.

Plus it's nice to see more finished obkk Akatsuki Kakashi on Ao3, so i wanna do my part.

No but seriously, this chapter was hard. Maybe because i'm putting new guy (Kisame) in the pot.

I planned to update last year , but i got writer block? I know i'm not a writer on a good days, but i tell you my fellow obkks, i could not think of even one sentence.

That's how bad it was. Well i think i'm over it, hopefully.

Anyhow thanks for reading again, if you want to, tell me what

you think or your speculations, I love reading em!

(Red Moon Circus) The Demon Shark 2

Chapter Summary

While Obito reserves his special hatred for Kiri, Kakashi could say he *mildly* detests Iwa.

Chapter Notes

Another chapter?? So soon?? Look at my obkk brainrot!

I haven't got around to thank you guys for the support during previous year! Thank you very much!! Your thoughts & comments fuel me to keep going! I read them multiple times, to assure myself people are still reading obkk fic. I mean brainrot consumes me but it's nice to see other people still has it too yknow?

Knowing i'm not alone in this aging hellhole.

Ahh it's just obkk's kind of canon dynamic and their characterization, particularly obkk during Tobi and Hound years. It tingles something in me.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Earth country is expectedly barren and Kisame is unexpectedly easy to talk with.

When they enter the region, Hound's throat itches. The air is dryer here, though it's not as bad as Suna.

Kisame is as talkative as Tobi, just sans his partner's constant tittering insanity. The demon shark shares stories about the various things he encountered with Itachi on Akatsuki's assignments. But mostly, he knows a lot of teahouses and cat cafes.

"Well, Itachi-san sometimes looks for them," Kisame chuckles. It was their tradition in-between missions.

A pity Hound never got to see Weasel's cute side in ANBU. Had he known his kouhai's... proclivities, they could've made detours if only so he can tease the uptight teen about it afterwards.

Spilled milk and all that.

So Itachi mostly lets Kisame do the leading and talking, while he skulks behind like the intimidating, brooding Uchiha he is - *was*. He was.

After relatively uneventful travel, they take a break. There're not many places to hide in Earth Country. The region is mostly stretches of rocky hills with sparse vegetation. But unlike in Wind or Fire, it's not swelteringly hot even when the noon sun is beaming down on them. So when they found an area with large boulders that can act as both shades and natural barriers, Kisame asks if Hound wants to rest.

The Demon Shark is...accomodating, for lack of a better word. Being physically much taller, his steps are longer than Hound's, yet Kisame automatically adjusts to his pace. Was it because he's used to being with the sickly Itachi? Hound doesn't know how to take that, but he appreciates it all the same. He could, but it'll be more tiring if he has to constantly match Kisame's larger gait.

After placing rudimentary seals (Hound did, Kisame just watched him curiously fiddle with ink brushes and papers) on the boulders surrounding their makeshift camp, they settle down. Since there're no branches to make a bonfire with, Kisame passes the water pot to Hound. He heats it to boiling temperature with a simple katon. then hands it back to Kisame who's ready with the tea leaves.

They sit across from each other while waiting for the tea.

“You’re a bit like Itachi-san aren’t you, Boss’ partner?”

Hound looks up at Kisame. The demon shark looks somber as he stares at him through the hazy smoke rising from the water pot.

Right, theirs was one of the few partnerships that got along with each other in Akatsuki. Hound and Itachi was both ANBU and the quiet type, so he gets the similarities.

“Why do you think so?” Hound asks because he assume Kisame just wants to let something out.

“Aa well, how quiet you both are, obviously,” the shark gives a small grin, which quickly disappears,

“And your... ,” Kisame makes vague gestures at him with one hand, “There’s this air about you that just reminds me of Itachi-san.”

“It sounds like you’re familiar with Itachi..san,” Kami it’s so awkward

to add that honorific with Weasel. But he doesn't want to tell Kisame that he knows Itachi. That'd open the conversation to a dangerous direction.

Kisame is silent before finally answering.

"Aa.. I won't say I know him well, but I guess.. I enjoyed his company more than with the other members."

Hound hummed.

"When we first met, I said that like sharks, us in Akatsuki would not hesitate to cannibalize each other. You know what Itachi-san answers with?"

The demon shark is obviously baiting so Hound tips his head in a gesture for the other man to continue.

"He told me straight, 'we're humans, not fish'. I tell you, I didn't expect that," Kisame barks out a laugh.

Hound chuckles. That's just like Weasel. His genius kouhai who can give you the weirdest response with a straight face.

"I wonder... if he finally realized what kind of person he was..."

When the hojicha finally let out its scent, Kisame look at the tea with a wistful look. He pours some into his cup, then spills it on the ground beside him.

Hound isn't sure if Kisame is talking to him at all. He keeps silent, letting Kisame the peace he seems to need at the moment. He looks up at the bright, blue sky above them, where a single falcon gracefully glides along the wind.

He wonders that too. Did Itachi find his answer when he died by his little brother's hand?

As if dispelling the solemn mood that came to him, Kisame shakes his head, then begin to work; He fills both his and Hound's cups, then takes out the food they packed. There're riceballs, mochi cakes, flour crackers, and other finger snacks. Unless something extraordinary happens, they plan on capturing Gobi today so there was no need to bring much.

They eat incompaniable silence, sometimes Kisame chimes in on

mundane topics which Hound would continue until the conversation dies down naturally. Then Hound poured for both of them, and Kisame hands him a sweet cakes which he refuses, revealing that he dislike sweet things. The demon shark gives an amused grin, saying that's the most different thing about Hound compared to Itachi so far.

Once he's finished with his meal, Hound leans on one of the boulders and takes out Icha-Icha. The last time he had time to read was back in Kumo, and now he's looking forward to finishing this chapter at least.

Kisame stops chewing when he sees the book, and scrunch up his nonexistent eyebrows at the rating sign stamped on the cover.

“...So that’s the questionable book Tobi warned me about,”

“Huh?” Hound distractedly asks. He’s at the chapter where Kisuke is eating Mayumi out and further drama should begin after this smutty part.

“...No. Nothing.”

The last thing to do before continuing is to re-check their weapons. Samehada has been more vocal, indicating the chakra source is close according to its owner. Hound doesn’t know how Kisame even began to understand the sentient sword’s language but he’s not about to ask.

Hound checks his kunai pouches, ensuring everything is in its place and ready for battle. His robe slightly opens from the action, exposing the slender chokuto hidden by his hip.

“Nice sword, boss’ partner.’

Hound tilt his head in acknowledgement.

“Thanks. It was a gift.”

Kisame whistles low and appreciative.

“Yeah? Chakra swords don’t come easy. Or at all, “ then Kisame adds teasingly, “Must’ve like you real bad.”

Hound looks at Kisame, then at the chokuto. Leave it to one of the 7 Swordsmen to be able to tell a chakra sword at a glance.

For a shinobi weapon, it’s visually ostentatious and not something

Hound would've picked for himself. Raised by the Uchiha, black sheep as he is Obito always has a better sense of aesthetic than him who prefers functional and undecorated.

"You got a name for it yet?" Kisame tries to sound casual despite craning his neck to look at where the chokuto is now hidden inside Hound's robe. These mist swordsmen and their obsession with swords...

Shinobi generally don't name their weapons. That practice comes from the Samurai in the Land of Snow. But then Kiri started the trend of naming their swords and the tradition of the 7 Swordsmen of Kiri was born along with their swords that became legendary themselves.

For the average shinobi though, naming is more for pets than weapon. Though he supposes Samehada might actually be more Kisame's pet than sword. Besides, ANBU never had the luxury of staying with one favorite sword. They all use standard issue chokuto to ease interchangeability. In a critical situation, it's these kinds of little things that can be the difference between finishing the mission and going home on your own legs, or in a body-storage scroll.

So no, Hound never thought about naming his sword.

But... this is a gift from Obito and not a weapon he plans on discarding after few uses.

Hound shakes his head, "I haven't...yet."

Kisame visibly deflates, though he keeps his grin.

"Aa...well, it's good to name your sword. Makes 'em more..personal. And when they do, they'll cut better," Kisame pats Samehada beside him fondly. The sword purrs, *purrs!* Hound isn't sure if it's cute or creepy.

"I'll think of one," He promises, because he wants to, not because Kisame looks disappointed.

"Yeah? Tell me once you do, I like swords," the demon sark visibly perks up.

Coming from one of Kiri's Swordsmen, an understatement.

"Sure."

They didn't get far before trouble started popping up quite literally.

Hound looks around and there are about 7 shinobis surrounding them. Iwa ANBUS, judging from their uniform and masks.

Although Hound and Kisame made no move to approach Iwagakure itself, it appears the Tsuchikage is the proactive type when it comes to defense.

"Akatsuki, we have no more business with you," the one Hound presumed to be the mission commander addresses them.

"Friend of yours?" Hound tilts his head at an angle toward Kisame.

Kisame honest-to-Kami laughs. Some of the ANBUS direct their attention on Hound instead of Kiri's demon shark; he feels the invasive chakra of a sensor trying to assess his chakra level and nature affinity.

"Nah, must still be sore over Yonbi," Kisame answers a bit too cheerfully.

Hound stare at the Iwa ANBUS tightening their grip around their weapons.

Yep, definitely annoyed.

"I thought they don't even like their jinchuurikis," Konoha has changed a bit since Naruto won them over, but in general the status quo remains. Jinchuurikis are hated breeds solely because humans hate what they fear, even if it's themselves who created those monsters.

Kisame sneers, "I think it's more about hating us more than they hate those sacrifices,"

"That's not fair. *I* haven't done anything to Iwa."

Kisame shrugs. "Well...,you're wearing the robe, so."

Of course.

Hound outwardly expresses disappointment by letting out a long-suffering sigh. Kisame cackles. *He* turned parts of Iwa into a crater while fighting the 4-tails but in defense, the lava part wasn't him.

The Iwa ANBUs look increasingly tense as both Akatsuki disregard them completely.

"Anyway. No can do guys, tell the crusty old man to come down himself if he wants to stop us," Kisame finally turn his attention to their welcoming party.

Inside the obscurity of his mask, Hound roll his eyes. The ANBUs also don't seem to think it was funny either.

"Then you both die here,"

That's all the warning they get before all 7 rush them. 4 for Kisame and 3 for him, which is flattering considering one has the moniker of the Demon Shark of Mist while he's practically a nobody.

They go straight for the kill. No flashy jutsu nor playing around, only precise techniques calculated to target the vital points.

In short, they're good and actually determined to kill Kisame and Hound.

The ones surrounding Kisame went for ninjutsu fights since it's harder for someone with such Water-natured chakra like Kisame to collect enough molecules to use as jutsu in Earth Country.

Well, in *theory*. Pretty soon Hound's robe billows as waves of violent water springs out of the previously dry, cracked ground.

Leaving the demon shark to have his fun, Hound focuses on his own situation. The 3 split into groups of 1 front fighters and 2 long-range support. Most likely they want to assess his abilities and fight patterns first. He takes out a kunai, twirling it around his index finger.

"We didn't know Akatsuki now recruits Konoha ANBU," one of the ANBU in the back pipes up.

There's always one in the team, one who tries to employ psychological tactics and somehow Hound always gets to fight that particular one.

"They don't," he clipped out, avoiding a sword shooting up from the

ground. Like with Raidou's platoon, Hound uses simple taijutsu and kunai, with kawarimi substitution as the only ninjutsu he employs.

Behind he heard more water sloshing and a gurgling noise. He thinks in sympathy for the one caught in Kisame's Water Prison. Drowning isn't a pleasant way to go.

"Is there any chance you can retreat and leave us be?" Hound tries, knowing the answer. It's mostly for his own benefit so that he won't wonder about what-ifs later.

"You mock us, Akatsuki? We're to kill you," The front-fighter ANBU spats, charging at him with a sword.

Alright then.

They're starting to use earth jutsus against him now, which he simply twists and jumps to avoid. Once a while the support ANBU with multiple chakra transformations uses Wind jutsus at him, and he had to substitute himself with a leaf on a tree to avoid a swift amputation.

Since he's made up his mind to eliminate them, this is the perfect timing to test his new technique in live combat.

The kunais he left are in place.

Here goes nothing, sensei.

Hound makes a seal and feels the tug of the chakra mark on one particular kunai. Time and space bends around him not unlike when he uses Kamui and with a flash of white, he reappears behind the ANBU closest to the marked kunai.

A simple swipe and one of the support ANBU drops like a sack of stone, carotid artery severed cleanly through.

He still had to use marked kunai to serve as lighting rods, but maybe one day he can put marks directly on a live target like Minato-sensei did.

Ever since he woke up with the extra reserves, Kakashi starts to play around with the jutsus he copied but never got to try because they might kill him solely based on the chakra requirement. Plus the irony

of using Minato-sensei's technique against Iwa shinobi isn't lost on him. He never got to thank them for that boulder that changed everything.

Hound isn't vengeful, he understands logically that most kills aren't personal. But what Iwa did made it personal for him even when he knew it was a war and those shinobi must've only been following their missions. Hound decides that still doesn't mean crap to him.

While Obito reserves his special hatred for Kiri, Kakashi could say he *mildly* detests Iwa.

He's rarely vindictive, so it's a foreign feeling when dark satisfaction curls in him as the remaining two recognize the technique and trembles slightly.

They should. It's the technique that slaughtered a thousand of their kind back in the war after all. Both ANBUs likely think twice about his offer now. Ah, but it's not like he'll let them off anymore, because Kakashi is respectful like that.

"Maa, don't say I didn't warn you," Kakashi sing-songs as his chakra reaches out into another mark.

It was over in seconds. After, he makes sure with the classic kunai doubletap.

Hound watches as the corpses begin to harden at different pace, then one by one crumble like brittle rocks. It's Iwa ANBU's disintegration seal. He never stayed around to observe its full effect before.

Kisame walks up to him, Samehada slung easily over his shoulder, still fully wrapped in her bandages.

"I see you had fun too, Boss' partner," Kisame had ended his fight with simultaneous Water Prisons the moment he saw Madara's partner fought back. He only entertained his fight for as long as he did to see what the man could actually do.

Hound yanks all the scattered kunai back to him with what Kisame assumes invincible chakra strings. It's not as fine as Sasori's but it signals an above-average chakra control nevertheless.

"I try. Did you get the one spying from the hill?"

"Shark food."

Ouch.

Hound nodded. He would've killed the shinobi quickly, but what's done is done.

"Then let's go,"

If Iwa ANBU operates anything like Konoha's, in a short-distance interception mission there would be designated intervals when they'd relay constant threat updates to the village. So when the message inevitably stops, there's no doubt the Tsuchikage would hear about it immediately and send an investigation team. Or since it's Akatsuki, he might actually come out himself.

It's best to make themselves scarce before Kisame gets any more idea about facing the Tsuchikage.

Hound didn't really need Kisame's cue to stop into a halt. Despite Earth Country being sunny and dry during their travel, the area beyond them is markedly different; The air is humid and steam vapor visibly rises from the ground. And the most visually different, the sky is dark like it's about to rain soon.

"Do jinchuurikis usually let out their chakra like this?" Hound's experience with jinchuriki comes from watching Tenzo mokuton-wrestle Naruto into submission whenever the boy let out too much Kyuubi chakra.

Kisame humms.

"If they're in tune with their beast, yeah,"

Ah so Gobi jinchuriki had achieved mutual cohesion with their beast. He recalls the last time he faced Minato and Kushina's son in that forest and the vile chakra seeping out of him, burning his skin.

Should he ask for advice for Naruto? *No wait*, he's not Konoha anymore damn it.

"There it is," Kisame points with Samehada. Hound wonders the wrist strength it must take to hold that position with one hand.

Indeed, there's someone, a man, sitting in seiza in the middle of the clearing.

Hound looks behind him. The rest of Earth Country is as sunny and dry as he last saw it. So it's just around this jinchuuriki that the weather completely changes. It's amazing what chakra can do once you're powerful enough. Hadn't he seen this weather-changing phenomenon from the Uchiha brothers' fight.

He crouches down to test the soil. It's damp and slightly hot. It wasn't just the air, the jinchuuriki's chakra permeated into the ground itself.

"You know, you're gonna overheat if you fight in that," Kisame side-eye him. The double masks and cloak can't be comfortable in a weather this humid.

"I'll manage," He knows some simple wind jutsu to keep dry. Besides, he can always remove the hoodie if it gets that hot. It's not like he had to keep his hair so secretive from fellow Akatsuki, the Gobi takes precedence over that.

But Kisame had been aiming at a different goal from the start.

"Hm well, how about this?"

Of course the bloodthirsty shark wanted to have a go at the jinchuuriki by himself. He did so with Yonbi before and Kisame told him that's the most fun he had in a long time.

Seeing Kisame's enthusiasm, Kakashi acquiesces easily. They don't know the full extent of Gobi's power so it's better if one of them stays back to observe anyway. If things go wrong, he knows Kisame is powerful enough to at least stay alive until Kakashi joins the fray. So after saying he'll jump in if needed, Kisame saunters off into the battlefield while Kakashi looks around for a flat rock to sit on and watch.

He split his attention to look out at the fight in front of him and constantly scan their surroundings in case there are more interferences from Iwa.

The demon shark stops short in front of the jinchuuriki and Kakashi assumes they're trading a few words. Then the man lashes out with iai-do, which Kisame immediately guards against with Samehada and

the fight begins in earnest. Kakashi opens his sharingan, recording the fight to share with Tobi later.

Kisame is fairing well against Gobi, once they had enough of kenjutsu, they trade water jutsus back and forth. Although the Gobi jinchuuriki actually uses what looks to be steam.

It's easy to keep track of who's who. One is clad in red samurai getup, the other in blue skin.

To his knowledge, there's only one shinobi who's famous for their Steam Release, and if that's who the jinchuuriki is, then this man must be Han.

He heard the stories from Minato-sensei back during the Third War. A shinobi from Iwa who fought on the frontline, remembers his sensei's tone when he retells the jutsus he saw to Obito, Rin and him sitting around the fireplace, listening fervently to the horrors of a shinobi clad in red armor scorching one of Konoha's shinobi's with steam release.

Kakashi feels strangely melancholic at the memory. While everyone thought they'd move past it, everyone is dealing with remnants of the Third War even now. Iwa is still apprehensive toward Konoha, Kiri's post-war manpower had been utterly decimated thanks to Yagura Karatachi's cull that they're barely an active player in the shinobi politics right now, too much internal strife to deal with before they can even look outward. Suna hasn't recovered economically that their previous Kazekage had to resort to selling gold dust. The survivors of the Third War still drag on their past while trying to live for the uncertain future.

But today, one of those stories is going to end.

When Han roared and red chakra begin to envelop him, Kakashi readily makes hand-signs to raise a makeshift earth barrier that rises in time to shield him from the hot steam exploding outward.

Kisame is grinning ear-to-ear, looking perfectly at ease even when Kakashi can see the massive burns scars on his body and face. Samehada is now out in the open, her bandages tattered on the ground around its handler.

The sky above begins to drizzle with warm water. Kakashi pulls out the scroll Tobi gave, and out of the items that came out was a traditional paper umbrella. He seals everything else back in, and

returns to sitting in place with the umbrella leaning against his shoulder.

Both shinobis aren't running out of chakra anytime soon. Kisame is constantly recovering thanks to Samehada, while Han's is increasing exponentially as he cloaks himself with more of Gobi's chakra.

It's basically watching two chakra-beasts snipes at each other with water guns.

Kakashi is stiff from folding his legs, but he doesn't really want to go outside the umbrella's protective shade. Although the water pelting down isn't so terribly hot, he prefers dry sandals. But if Kisame isn't ending this soon, Kakashi might just step in so he doesn't fall asleep from boredom.

In the back, Kakashi wonders what the rest of Iwa is doing and why no one else shows up. Surely after Yonbi, there's no guessing what Akatsuki members are doing back in their country. Did they truly not care enough about their jinchuuriki being taken? Or are they currently amassing troops to confront them?

He tries not to imagine the loneliness Han might feel right now. Surrounded by enemies and abandoned by his village he fought a war for.

...Kakashi might've spent too much time around Obito's rambling.

He sighs just as Kisame finally brute-force Han into unconsciousness by disorienting the half-transformed jinchuuriki with fierce tidal waves from all directions and then slamming him hard to the ground. Samehada must've siphoned a lot to dispel that protective chakra coat.

The battlefield is now a lake, and Kisame's even using chakra to stand on top water. Kakashi can't fathom just how much chakra the demon shark has. Combined with Samehada, he has practically unlimited supply until his own enemy runs out.

When Han doesn't wake up, Kisame picks him up and drags the body leisurely across the water to where Kakashi is waiting.

His Akatsuki robe is torn, burn scars marred his entire face and skin which are in the process of healing, and he's wholly drenched and steaming like a boiled shark. But Kisame's grin never falters as he drops Han in front of Kaakshi.

“Here ya go, boss said you’ll take care of transport,”

Kakashi nods and produces a long chain from Obito’s storage scroll alongside his own chakra suppression seals. It won’t do jack shit with a jinchuuriki. He will perform the real restraints later.

In the end, Iwa never did come for Han. Kakashi stamps out a frustrated feeling threatening to bubble up. He shouldn’t have had expectations.

Why are shinobi village like this? They’re the one who made Han who he is, and now they threw him away. Realistically speaking, if the Tsuchikage himself comes here, there’s not much both of them can do. Maybe they can fight to the end, but against a Kage AND a 5-tail? No chance, unless Kakashi reveals all the trump cards he has and he knows he won’t do that.

With the pretense of binding Han is done, Kakashi turns back toward the demon shark, whose wounds have markedly healed, leaving only slight scarring on his blue skin.

“I’m going to deliver this to Tobi. Where will you go now Kisame?”

Kisame is wringing out his robe. It’s a useless action, he’ll likely have to get a new one anyway.

“Gonna rest a bit, then maybe hit the coast for some crab cakes before the sealing,”

“Hmm. There’s a good shop near Taki,” Kakashi gives him the name and the general location.

Kisame regards him with a happy grin. He slung Samehada back into her holster.

“I’ll try that one then,”

Kakashi nods, “I’ll be off now.” He makes a single hand seal but stops when Kisame speaks.

“Hey, it’s nice working with you, Boss’ partner. I hope we can fight each other someday,” the demon shark looks *eager*.

Having seen him fight Gobi on his own, Kakashi would like to not fight Kisame someday or *any day*.

“You too, Kisame. Tell me the review later.”

He gives him a lazy two-finger salute which Kisame returns with raising a hand, and Kakashi disappears in a puff of mist.

When Han wakes up groggy and obviously concussed, the first thing he physically notices is how sluggish his chakra is and that he had been bound in chains. Kokuo is screaming in his head, telling him that they're in danger and that they need to get away from this place.

He looks around, disoriented. Hoshigaki Kisame had slammed him around pretty hard and then drowned him in a deluge. He'll pay the man back once he recovers and get out of-

The world had changed.

Or rather, disappeared.

At first he thought it's nighttime, but the sky had turned completely black and devoid of anything. The rocky plains of Earth Country is gone, there're only rows and rows of washed-out white blocks as far as he can see. Dread starts to wash over initial annoyance. It doesn't seem like he's in a cave just looking at how expansive this area is, yet which region on earth would have this kind of strange terrain?

The utterly alien landscape in front of him is why he only just notices someone was standing on top of one of the blocks, looking right at him.

Adrenaline surges and he lets Kokuo take over. The chain is starting to melt, but not fast enough. The other Akatsuki he saw walking with Hoshigaki cleared the distance between them in one jump.

Kokuo's take-over should've been instantaneous, but the chakra-suppressant seal on him slows it down considerably. When the man lands in front of him, Han snarls an animalistic growl. He knew what Akatsuki did to Son and if he doesn't escape soon, that will also be his fate. The man isn't fazed with the corrosive red chakra seeping out of him and Han's body is seized up in fear that wasn't entirely his own.

Kokuo is..scared.

Instantly Han regretted thinking he could beat his pursuer. He should've fled, no matter what it cost his pride. He should've gone into hiding and protected Kokuo from Akatsuki.

But deep down he knows, it's too late now.

The masked man knelt in front of him. Beyond the eyehole he sees two mismatched eyes boring into his. Black and... red.

Sharingan.

Kokuo shrieks, but there's nowhere to go in their shared mindscapes. Han watches helplessly as the tomoes slowly merge into a pinwheel shape.

As an utterly inescapable genjutsu takes hold of him, Kokuo wails and thrashes, before the voice that had been with him for almost three decades finally recedes into unsettling silence.

When the world quiets down, Han feels his consciousness slowly slips away again for what he understands will be the last time.

“I’m sorry,” the masked man sounds genuinely apologetic.

The resentment at the man’s tone was the last thing Han feels as his awareness finally melt away.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for those expecting Kakashi's fighting alongside Kisame haha! But maybe there'll be more of these temporary partnerships later.

Kisame would notice that chokuto Obito gave him, come on. I already have ideas on the name, can you guess? hehe!

Now that he has the chakra reserves, Kakashi! would! try Hiraishin! He tried copying rasengan before, but gave up since his affinity is Lighting. Hiraishin though, is a space-time jutsu. Which is more his alley thanks to having to figure out Kamui.

And I guess Kakashi is comfortable using Kamui this time because he knows Obito expected him for transport. So logically Obito would make sure to keep both Zetsus close to him. It's that mutual wordless trust between obkk... sigh i'm insane.

Thank you for reading!! Tell me what you think of this chapter!!

I'm so crazy for Kakashi using Minato's technique in Iwa. It's a form of payback for Obito, methinks.

> Canon things:

Han participated in the Third War as Iwa shinobi so i assume it's likely Minato, who often went behind their line would encounter him, or at least hear things about him.

According to databook, Itachi's hobby is visiting japanese cafes. I just extend that a bit to cat cafes.

Next chapter: Tobi x Kakashi

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